The Spy

By Burges Johnson

Yesterday mother she spanked me so hard,
I sort of keep feelin' it now;
For somehow she learned, when I hid in the yard,
That I'd done what she didn't allow.
I ast how she knew that I'd gone an' been bad,
An' she said that a little bird told her I had.

It's always some bird that has tattled before,
And helped grown-up folks to find out;
And now when I've just shut the jam-closet door
I find *you* a-hoppin' about!
And if you're the bird that's been doin' all that,
I'll find where you live, an' I'll tell my old cat.

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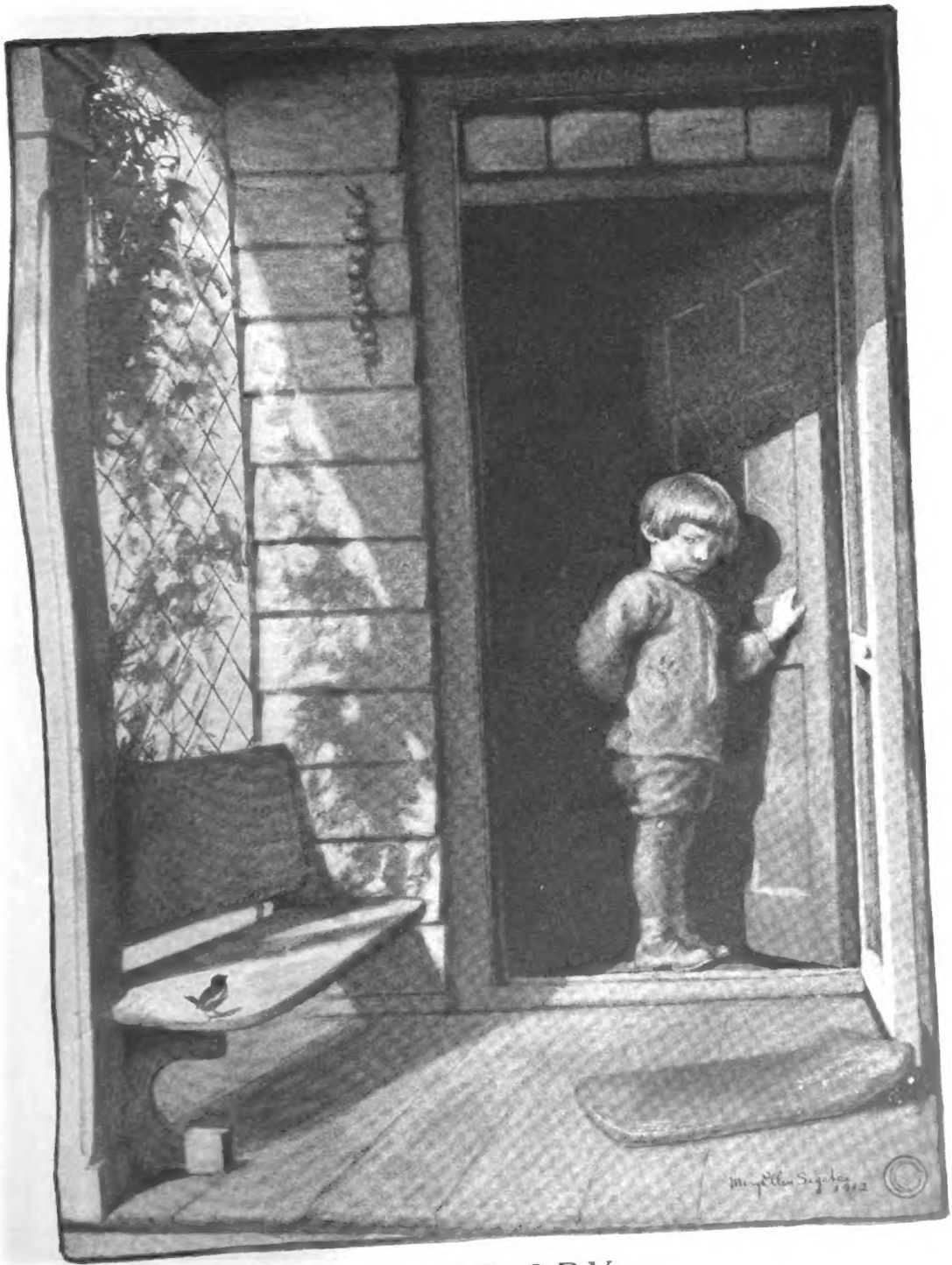

THE SPY

from a painting by

MARY ELLEN SIGSBEE

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COLINE

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KIDNAPPING COLINE

by

HENRY C. ROWLAND

AUTHOR OF "BACK-FIRE," "THE PILOT-FISH," ETC.

CHAPTER I

THE CONSPIRACY

ALL of my morning had been spent in vain argument with Coline, whom I left in a mock-serious mood after expending all of my eloquence and the bulk of my patience. This latter would not have lasted long if I had not loved her so devotedly and had an instinctive feeling that underneath her attitude of indifference she really cared for me.

On leaving her I went straight to the office of Mr. Satterlie, Coline's father, a strong and kindly man of middle age who had amassed a considerable fortune in the South Sea trade and now directed his various affairs from San Francisco. I found him with his feet on the edge of his desk, a long cheroot between his even teeth, dictating to his stenographer. He sent the young man out after his first glance at my troubled face, and regarded me for a moment with sympathetic interest.

"Well, Jack," said he, "I gather from your expression that the course of true love has got you pretty deep into the doldrums."

"That precisely defines it," I answered, wearily, taking the chair he indicated. "I could stand a bit of heavy weather, but this horrid calm is maddening."

"What does she say?"

"She persists in her determination to marry that scoundrel Von Reibnitz as soon as she comes of age next month. I've talked my head off—and hers too, I fancy. She claims to be in honor bound by a promise given him; but between us, Mr. Satterlie, there is something more than that underneath the whole wretched business. The brute undoubtedly has some sort of fascination for her. I've told her things about that man—things that I can prove—that would have made her heave an inkstand at my head and call me all sorts of names if she cared for him. I did it on purpose to see how she really felt, and half expecting all of the time to have her jump up and tell me to go and say them to his face. But she didn't."

Mr. Satterlie rolled his cheroot between his teeth and looked at me thoughtfully.

"What would you have done if she had?"

"I'd have gone and done it. In fact,

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I've about made up my mind to do it anyway. As he's a German and claims to be a man of birth, he'd probably challenge me. In that case I'd strain a point and take him on, trusting to *Dieu et le Droit* to shoot a hole in him. There doesn't seem to be much else to do."

Mr. Satterlie's blue eyes kindled for an instant; then he shook his head and threw his cheroot into the fireplace.

"There's nothing in that, my boy," said he. "I know all about this man, Von Reibnitz. I've looked him up, both in Germany and out in the Pacific. His title to nobility is right enough; he's the Count Konrad Von Reibnitz and his family is an old one. You've never seen him, have you?"

"No," I answered.

"I have—and I tell you he's some man. If you were to do what you say he'd make you feel like a fool."

"How?" I asked.

Mr. Satterlie shrugged. "He's so quiet and polite. He's more than quiet. He's a silent man. You can see his thoughts brimming up and swelling under you and around you—just like running out before a typhoon—but they never comb. There's never any water—any loose water—on deck, you understand. He gives you a sort of mental heave and then drops you into the trough. At least, that's the way he affected me. He's got insides to his head as well as to his body. He's a force to be reckoned with, my boy."

"You seem to know a good deal about him," I observed.

"I know all about him," answered Mr. Satterlie. "On his father's side the family is of the older Bavarian nobility, and his mother was English: the Honorable Helen Maddock. He had to leave Europe for some woman scrape which was followed by a duel in which he killed the Baron Hartzmann, who was old enough to be his father. The popular sentiment was very strong against young Von Reibnitz, so he cleared out to the Pacific and got a position in the trading house of Muller and Lefferts, in Sydney. He made a number of voyages in their vessels, studied navigation, and finally got command of one of the company's schooners. About a year later they sacked him—for some reason which I haven't been able to learn—when he got a job with a rival concern. They soon got enough of him, too. One of my skippers, Captain Saltonstall, who is here in port now, tells me that Von Reibnitz has a very bad reputation for his behavior with natives. You've never met old Saltonstall, have you?"

"No," I answered.

"Well, if you knew him you could appreciate what it means when he knocks anybody. He's about the kindest, gentlest old dear that ever lived. Rather reminds you of a faithful old high-bred Hambletonian horse—too tender-hearted to flick his tail at a fly. He's a gentleman. When I asked him about Von Reibnitz he hemmed and hawed and said he'd never seen the man but had heard that he was a smart skipper, a very successful trader. But when I told him that I was making these inquiries because my daughter had met the man in Honolulu and was determined to marry him, that fetched him and he opened up and told me some tales he'd heard of Von Reibnitz which, if true, would class him as about the biggest scoundrel unhung."

"Have you told them to Coline?" I asked.

"Yes. I told her, too, about what you heard of him in Samoa—that ugly business of the missionary's daughter."

"What did she say?"

Mr. Satterlie shrugged and pushed out his under lip.

"She seemed rather to enjoy hearing it all. When I'd got pumped out she asked for more. There's no accounting for the female point of view."

We were both silent for a moment.

"You know, sometimes the best of women are often attracted by the worst men," he went on; "sort of effort on the part of human nature to strike an average, I suppose. Otherwise society would be composed of angels and devils as the result of natural selection. However, I don't intend that my little girl shall sacrifice herself for the sake of the moral equilibrium of the world."

"How are you going to prevent it?" I asked. "Coline swears that she's going to marry this brute. You know what a will she's got."

Mr. Satterlie's eyes narrowed and he leaned back, chewing at the end of his cheroot.

"It's going to take some doing," he admitted. "The worst of it is I've got to go east on the first."

"Why not take her with you?"

"What's the use? Von Reibnitz would

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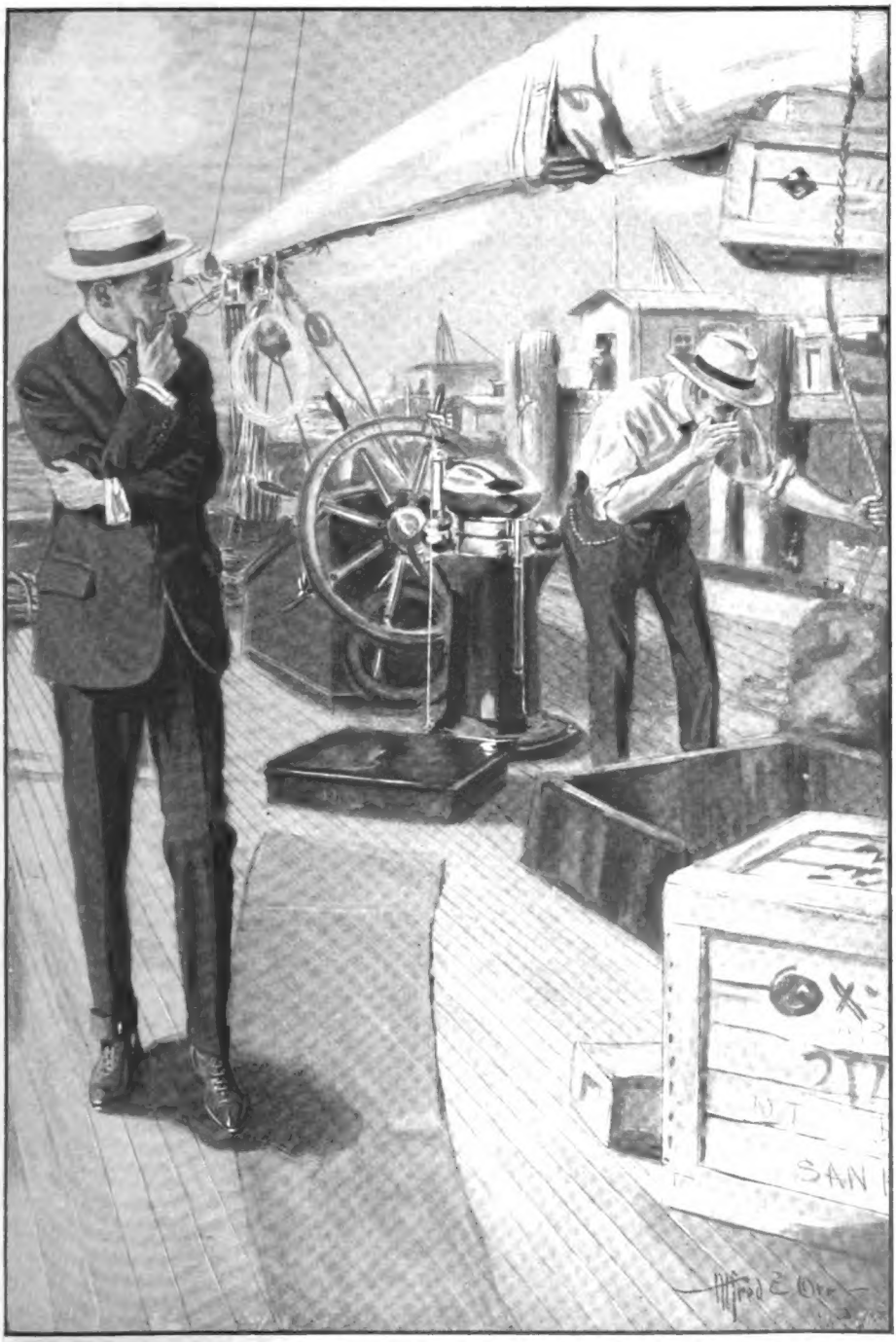

HAD I GUESSED WHAT THE OLD INNOCENT WAS UP TO, THE EXPEDITION WOULD HAVE SEEN ITS FINISH THEN AND THERE.

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follow. Besides, I've got a better plan." He looked at me thoughtfully, and although he did not actually smile, the lines of humor around his eyes showed that he was secretly amused at something which was passing in his mind. "I'm going to ship her off for a long cruise with old Saltonstall," said he.

"What——?"

"Just so; and you must go too, my boy."

"What in the dickens are you talking about?" I demanded.

Mr. Satterlie's grin found its way to the surface. It did not strike me that there was anything to grin about, but I had a lot of confidence in this sane and hearty ex-sailorman, so I merely sat tight and waited for him to explain himself.

"Don't look so scared, son," said he, and his clear blue eyes twinkled at me. "Old Saltonstall and I have got the whole thing nicely framed up. I've doped out this game by quite a number of moves." He leaned forward, dropping his big elbows on the rim of the desk and clasping his strong, muscular hands.

"Look here, Jack," said he, "all of this business is going to take some doing, as I said before. Coline is really very fond of you, and I want you to marry her because I like you—oh, sit still—there's no use in arching your neck. I know that you love the little girl more than anybody in the world does, except myself. I can tell you, son, that the night she was born I cried more than she did—and it gave me the jolt of my life, because I didn't know what was happening to me. But let me tell you, son, that when I poked my little finger at that newborn kiddie and her little hand gripped it and clung to it—and she opened those little baby-blue eyes and blinked up at me, something happened——"

He jumped up and spat out his cheroot, then blew his nose—"She was red and raw, and looked like one of these little fledgling sparrows that you find on the sidewalk in the spring; but she looked all right to me. I liked her from the start—" he turned on me with a sort of savage violence—"and do you think now that Von Reibnitz is going to get her? Son, I'd slaughter him first."

I gaped at him. This passion in his voice was like a squall out of a clear sky.

Then he laughed a bit and the tension relaxed.

"I've got twenty vessels at sea," he said, "six schooners, five steam freighters, three iron sailing-ships, and half a dozen Sound coasters. The *Sabbath Day* has been fitting out as a yacht for the last three weeks, and I told the Union bunch that if the work wasn't finished in a month they could count on losing my trade. They wanted three months, but they gave in; and I tell you, son, you can't spit aboard her without hitting a workman. Coline and old Saltonstall and you are going off for a voyage of indefinite length."

I considered this proposition for a few moments in silence while Satterlie watched me through a cloud of smoke. Presently I asked:

"Where are you going to send us?"

"To the South Seas. You may be gone six months—possibly a year."

"But as soon as she comes of age, Coline will insist on being allowed to come home," I objected.

"Then she will insist in vain," Satterlie answered coolly. "Captain Saltonstall shall have orders to call at about fifty different islands scattered pretty well over the South Pacific, but none of them on any line of transportation. You ought to be able to get ashore every few days. Strictly speaking, it's kidnapping, I suppose—" he grinned—"but Coline would never go to the length of bringing a criminal suit against her father, and she is very fond of the skipper. Of course, she has no idea of how long she's going to be shipped off for. She thinks it's merely for a voyage out to Australia, and has probably made up her mind to give you the slip out there and come back on a liner."

"Where is Von Reibnitz now?" I asked.

"In the East, I believe."

"Has he got any money aside from what he earns?" I asked.

"I don't think so. That's the worst of it, because, you see, as soon as she comes of age Coline will inherit about a million from her mother's father, who died five years ago. Von Reibnitz knows this and it makes him all the keener. He also knows, as everybody does, that I've set my heart on seeing you and Coline married. Your father was my dearest friend, and you are just like him. You are the only man living to whom I would entrust my little girl, and I would trust her with you anywhere and under any circumstances."

"Thank you, Mr. Satterlie," I said, wondering a little at the peculiar intensity of his voice and the sudden piercing expression

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of his frosty blue eyes. He leaned over quickly, and dropped his strong hand on my shoulder.

"Just remember that always, whatever happens, Jack, my boy," said he, in a more than usually resonant bass.

CHAPTER II

CAPTAIN GLASS-OF-FASHION

The following day Mr. Satterlie took me down to the Union Iron Works to look over the schooner and make the acquaintance of Captain Saltonstall.

"You'll find the skipper and the mate an amusing team, Jack," said Mr. Satterlie as we were on our way. "The mate is a canny Scot named Whistler, who claims to be the laird of some few acres of gorse and stones in the 'Auld Countrie.' He owns a big ranch up in the Saskatchewan which is run by a younger brother, and I imagine he is very well off. He's a splendid seaman."

When we reached the Iron Works we found the mate alone aboard the schooner, the skipper having gone off on some short errand. Mr. Whistler was a bony, muscular Scot with small, bright eyes which twinkled alertly from their deep recesses. Such of his face as was visible under his ginger-colored whiskers looked as if about to peel from sunburn. He was not pretty, yet looked safe and effective.

Mr. Satterlie introduced us, and the mate's first swift glance gave me the impression of having been thoroughly inspected.

"How do you do, sir?" said the mate. "You will be the young gentleman who owns the *Sayonara*, I am thinking."

"Yes," I answered; "do you know her?"

"Only a bowin' acquaintance, as one might say. She looks to be a good boat, though perhaps a bit too fine forward. Aweel, it is a pleasant thing to be able to have one's private yacht to sail about on. This one will no be so bad when these idlin' carpenters get through their wor-r-k."

The *Sabbath Day* was a handsome, able-looking vessel of about two hundred tons. Her lines, so far as one could judge, did not promise any great speed, and she was light-drafted for her size and very broad of beam. I was looking over her roomy sweep of deck when, happening to glance at the wharf, I saw approaching a somewhat singular figure.

It was that of a man who looked to be about seven feet high, wonderfully dressed, and striding along with the pleased and jaunty self-consciousness of a fop of the seventeenth century. As he drew near I saw that his features were lofty and imposing, with a high-bridged, benevolent nose, very large and slightly protruding brown eyes, high cheekbones, and a mouth which was concealed by a big iron-gray mustache rakishly twisted up at the ends.

I guessed at once that this must be Captain Saltonstall, and I stared at him, absolutely fascinated. He had on a black cutaway coat, with a waistcoat of pearl gray, and a large puff necktie of a neutral green held by a pearl scarfpin. His trousers were rather light, bordering closely on being loud, but of good cut and material, freshly creased and hanging nicely about the gaitered tops of his patent-leather shoes. He had on a top hat, dazzling to the eyes, suède gloves to match his scarf, and swung a malacca stick in a debonair fashion as he strode briskly forward.

I turned to glance at Mr. Satterlie and caught the eye of the mate, which twinkled at me like a star on a frosty night, though with what significance I could not have told.

Mr. Satterlie was having a silent struggle with his risibles.

And yet there was really nothing to laugh at. Saltonstall was undoubtedly at that moment the best-groomed man in San Francisco, and there was not a single note in his costume that was not strictly correct. Moreover, one saw at a glance that his clothes had been turned out by a smart tailor, and were undoubtedly the best that money could buy. His beautiful raiment adorned his lean, big-boned frame like the plumage of a game-cock with feathers nicely pruned and not a pinion awry.

But this simile lost its aptness when one glanced at that big, beaming, benevolent face. It was not a red face, nor was there anything coarse or sensual about it. On the contrary, it held a sort of virtuous serenity. One did not need to be a student of physiognomy to see at a glance that here was one of society's grown-up, innocent, sweet-natured children.

When Whistler spoke I felt like hitting him; it seemed so unkind. Captain Saltonstall was sweeping aboard when he spoke—and he spoke in that particular sort of stage-whisper which carries farther than a shout.

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"Look at him!" (his voice was rather like a saw which is shy a dozen or odd teeth.) "Look at his clothe'es! He is dressed without reference to taste or expense."

"He looks all right to me," I answered.

Whistler's bright, alert little eyes glittered at me out of their deep hollows. I wasn't very sure about Whistler and he wasn't very sure about me. We were taking each other's measure—though I must say that I think he had "my number" in about a second.

"He is not at his best," Whistler observed. "The mon canna' drink wuskey. One drink, and all is off. His eyes are brown, as ye may have noticed. When a mon's eyes are brown he should not drink. Now the skipper has had his dram with the superintendent and that is what is making him so coltish. I can always tell. He lifts his feet higher and is too polite."

Our conversation was interrupted by Captain Saltonstall, who came down the gangplank in the cautious manner of one unused to such contraptions. Or perhaps he was afraid of soiling his new suède gloves on the hand-rail, which bore imprints of the grimy paws of the workmen.

"Ha, Mr. Satterlie," said he in a deep, amphoric bass, "how do you do to-day, sir?" He shook hands with Mr. Satterlie, then turned to me with a dip and swing to his long, lean frame. "And you, sir, Mr. Hamilton, I presume? Delighted to make your acquaintance, sir. And how do you find the work proceeding, Mr. Satterlie?"

"We were waiting for you to go over it with us."

Mr. Satterlie had certainly spared no pains nor expense to make his daughter comfortable during her compulsory cruise. He told me that for some time he had been contemplating the conversion of the *Sabbath Day* into a yacht for his own private use, as she was the easiest sea-boat he had ever sailed aboard and quite smart enough for his requirements.

When our tour of inspection was finished, the captain asked us to step into his cabin, when, as none of us cared for stimulants, he ordered tea, which the steward brewed in the Chinese manner and served in the double cups. Whistler had gone off about some business, and as we were sipping the excellent tea I observed that the captain was studying me in a kindly and unobtrusive manner which nevertheless conveyed the impression of a careful and searching scrutiny.

This finally began to get on my nerves, especially as nothing had yet been said directly of the object of our proposed voyage. So in the effort to get some idea of what was passing in his mind I presently asked:

"What are you going to say, Captain, when Miss Satterlie demands that she be allowed to go her own way—which she certainly will as soon as she discovers the real object of the voyage?"

He looked so distressed that I was almost sorry that I had put the question. His big brown eyes, which were slightly mottled with lighter hazel spots in the iris, bulged at me with a pained expression.

"Ah, Mr. Hamilton," said he in a hollow and lugubrious bass, "you must be a mind-reader. In fact, I have been thinking of that very matter. Miss Satterlie is a very high-spirited as well as uncommonly charming young lady, and often I find myself wondering if my resolution will be sufficient to carry out the instructions of my employer and old friend, Mr. Satterlie. We can only hope that she may not be too severe upon us."

"If I know anything about my daughter," said Satterlie with rather a malicious grin, "she will make you feel like a yaller dog."

Salstonstall groaned like a wind-broken horse.

"How about myself?" I asked.

"Oh, you'll wish you'd choked when you were a baby."

"You're jolly encouraging," I protested. "That's not the way you talked yesterday."

"Well, it's up to you, son. If you can't manage to cut out Von Reibnitz when you've got her all to yourself" (he and the captain exchanged a swift, almost furtive, look), "then we're cooked, I suppose. Let's hope that Von Reibnitz may get himself jailed or hanged or something in the meanwhile."

"From what I have heard of the man," boomed Salstonstall, "that is quite possible." He stared at me owlishly. "You must know, Mr. Hamilton, that it is extremely painful for me to lend myself to this performance, which after all is little better than kidnapping. It is only through the horror inspired by the thought of that exquisite and charming young lady sacrificing herself to such a ruffian as I know this Von Reibnitz to be that I have consented to

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"OF COURSE, AS YOU SAY, WE ALL KNOW THE REAL OBJECT OF THE VOYAGE, AND SO THERE IS NO USE TO MINCE MATTERS. PAPA WANTS TO FORCE ME UPON JACK."

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carry out her father's wishes. Mr. Satterlie assures me that he would prefer to see his daughter drowned rather than married to Von Reibnitz."

"Does Mr. Whistler know about the scheme?" I asked.

"He shares our confidence in full."

"What does he think about it?"

"At first he flatly refused to have any part in the business on the ground that it was legally criminal. He has not yet actually consented and is inclined to be disagreeable when the subject is mentioned; but I am of the opinion that when the time comes for sailing he will serve, though under protest. I have told him that he must give me a positive answer by Monday, as in the event of his refusing I shall have to secure the services of another mate."

"You don't need to do that," I answered. "I hold a master's certificate and can act as mate. The fewer mixed up in the business the better."

Again there passed between Mr. Satterlie and the captain that quick, furtive look which had already puzzled me.

"That would scarcely do, Jack," said Mr. Satterlie. "There's no doubt of your ability, of course, but Captain Saltonstall would feel more at ease with a professional."

"Oh, just as you like," I answered, rather huffed.

We left shortly after, Mr. Satterlie going to the club to play billiards and I to call on Coline.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH COLINE LAUGHS AT THE CAGE

Until quite recently I had not seen Coline for five years, as I had spent three of these in Europe and the last two on my voyage around from England aboard the schooner yacht which I had bought there. During this time she had matured from a headstrong child, with an impudent, pug-nosed face and a violent disposition, into a deliciously molded woman of tantalizingly seductive figure, and a face that troubled the dreams of all the young bucks in town—and a good many of the older ones.

I would not say that Coline was a flirt—she had too much heart for that; but barring the flirt's heartless indifference to the unhappiness she might cause, she came pretty near it. She glowed and vibrated in the warmth of admiration, and it was irresistible for her to entice.

That trait so rare in women, a strong sense of kindly humor (which she had inherited from her father, who loved her nearly to death), was the saving of many a man's peace of mind, because few men like to be amusing without any such intention on their part. Coline had laughed many an ardently foolish swain back into his senses.

Another saving grace was that while she might entice she never promised anything—and the man who takes things for granted with a pretty woman is always entitled to a slap of the foot. Coline loathed the methods of the modern "piazza squeezer." She loved to kiss and pet her father, but nobody else had ever kissed her; and unless a man was a fool he knew that nobody ever could until it pleased her to give the richness of her nature in heaping handfuls.

Besides all of this, Coline had an unusual quantity of sound, sane common sense and a great supply of natural kindliness, and that wonderful quality of sympathetic interest in such lives as happened to touch hers. I don't think that she was possessed of much imagination (fortunate girl), but she had powerful instincts which scorned the effort of analysis.

However, these are not always to be depended upon too much, as we shall see.

When she greeted me she began to laugh. When Coline laughed she threw back her head and half-closed her eyes and gurgled in her creamy throat, then stopped suddenly and looked at one with a serious, surprised expression as if to say: "What in the world are you laughing at?" This time I said it for her.

"It's so funny," she explained, "dear old Dad boxing us up on the *Sabbath Day*—like a pair of canary birds that he is trying to mate. I'll peck you on the head, Jack."

"You may start now, if you like," I answered. "It doesn't need the *Sabbath Day*."

"Perhaps I'd better," she answered. "When are we going to sail?"

"Some few days before you come of age," I answered. "I'm not bothering much about the start so long as we manage to beat the pistol. It's the finish that's disturbing my repose."

Coline laughed again, then said: "I like you, Jack. I'll make a small bet that I'll like you even better before we get back."

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"I'll raise you a stack of blues—and there's no doubt about my having them—that you'll hate me like the devil before we look at the Golden Gate from the westward," I answered. "You are going to be kidnapped, Coline. It's only fair to warn you. Good old Saltonstall is having a fit about it."

"The old dear," said Coline. "Don't you love him?"

"None of that elixir to spare," I answered, sadly.

"You're getting rather rakish yourself, Jack." She gave me one of those intent looks which made her resemble her father so strongly. "How many Japanese sweethearts?"

"Ashamed to say. Besides, I didn't go there. Why Japanese girls, when there are always a lot of things to be done aboard?"

"What sort of things?"

"Necessary things—such as—" I hesitated.

"Such as what?"

"Well—entertaining, mostly. You see, I had a lot of letters—and a rattling good cook."

"Did you entertain many ladies?" asked Coline demurely.

"Quite a number—but never *en tête-à-tête*."

"Anchorite!"

"No, anchor light. You see, I never wanted to risk getting run down."

"Old fraud. I'll bet you had some wilder nights on your yacht in port than you ever had at sea."

"Well," I admitted, "once when I gave a dinner party to some Russian officers we had to knock open the freeing ports. However, I did not get drunk myself."

"Virtuous youth. Did you ever do anything that you were ashamed of, Jack?"

"Oh, yes. I was rather ashamed the other day when I rapped Von Reibnitz. Tell me, Coline, are you really in love with him?"

"Now there you go again," said Coline, plaintively. "Why do you suppose I want to marry him? Because I hate him?"

"No; because he has infatuated you."

"Then go ahead and infatuate me yourself, if you are so upset about it. You have my permission to try."

"Everybody has that," I answered, sadly.

"Von Reibnitz hadn't. I'd been warned against him."

"No wonder he succeeded," I answered with a sigh.

"I don't admit that he has," Coline retorted, "but he's come nearer to it than any other man I ever met. You don't understand, Jack; Konrad is not such a gory pirate as you all seem to think. There's a lot in his nature that is really sweet and lovable. He's been wild, no doubt, but he's never done anything treacherous or cowardly."

"How do you know?" I asked, rather vapidly.

"Because I understand his nature. Besides, a woman has an instinct about such things." Coline looked at me and laughed. "Take my advice, Jack," said she. "The next time you fancy yourself in love, sigh less and swear more."

"Damn his soul—" I began, but Coline clapped her hand over my mouth.

"Oh, Jack," she cried, in despair, "I'll never be able to make a successful lover of you, my dear. That's not at all the way to go about it. Put your heart in your work."

"But I haven't any left to put in it."

"Then pretend to have. Only pretend terribly well. If you are a good enough pretender you can get almost anything that you want, because, you see, you've got to be able to fool yourself before you can hope to fool anybody else."

"But I don't want to fool anybody," I answered, "not even myself. I'd rather go without."

Coline looked at me thoughtfully. "Then if you were very much in love with a woman, you would never fool her for the sake of getting her, would you?" she asked.

I wriggled. Afterward when it was too late it occurred to me that the correct answer to this question would have been: "Perhaps, if I thought that she was fooling herself," or something of the sort. Most of us have our normal allowance of that kind of slow-freight repartee. But at the moment, Coline's question struck me like an accusation.

"No," I answered, with another squirm. "That is, it would depend on circumstances."

She leaned back and laughed. "Good old Jack," said she, and I felt even more of a fraud, being neither good nor old. "The sort of wife that you need—if you really do need one, which I am inclined to doubt—is a great big easy-going dear like yourself."

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She looked at me and laughed, and her eyes suddenly softened. "Don't look at me like that," said she, "unless you want to make me cry."

"I wish I could," I answered.

"Well," she answered, pensively, "perhaps you may, some day."

I reached over and took her hand. Coline did not resist. I would have liked it better if she had, because that would have shown that she felt something. Instead, she let it lie in my paw a good deal as children sometimes do when you are trying to explain something which happens to interest them.

"Look here, Coline," I said, "a man doesn't have to belong to the turtle breed because he happens to move slowly. I'll bet that I do more thinking in twenty-four hours than you do in a month——"

"'Thought is quicker than action,'" she interrupted, "but if you were to sit in a cave and think for a hundred years it wouldn't make as much impression on the surrounding landscape as a charge of dynamite. You think too much, Jack. You sit and smoke and think, and sail around on your yacht and think—and think—and think—but what have you ever actually done? I am telling you all this for your own good. Some day you will want something terribly badly. Just now you happen to think that you want me, but you really don't, deep down in the bottom of your heart——"

"That will do," I answered. "You don't know any more about my heart than you do about your own. I came up here to tell you something, but now I'm not going to do it. You are quick-minded, Coline, but you really haven't got much grown-up sense."

Coline nodded.

"I know it," she answered. "And I like to hear you say so, Jack. What must I do to get it?"

"Get older," I answered. "The trouble with you is that you were not born long enough ago. However, let us hope that time may remedy that."

"A *good* time might help a lot," said Coline. (She was always quick at that sort of tea-house talk which most men despise.) "Do you think that we shall have it when I am kidnapped, Jack?"

"I don't believe so," I answered, "but you might get some of that action which you appear to crave."

"Not with such gentle old dears as Saltonstall and Whistler and you, I'm afraid. Really, Jack, it's too absurd for Dad to ship me off like this. I have given Konrad my promise and I mean to keep it, and all that Dad can do is to delay the game a little. I'll take the first steamer back from Australia and marry Konrad the day that I land. Personally I don't object particularly to the voyage, as I like the sea, and my best chum, Evelyn Stall, lives in Sydney. I wish that I could make a match between you two," she concluded pensively.

"Where is Von Reibnitz now?" I asked.

"In Chicago, I believe. I told him that he had better clear out until my coming of age, as it makes Dad nervous to have him standing off and on. He says it reminds him of a shark waiting for a boat to upset." She laughed. "I suppose you think I'm horribly undutiful."

"I think that you're pretty ungrateful," I answered, wearily. "Think what a devoted father yours has been."

"No girl ever had a sweeter. But he doesn't understand, Jack, and neither do you. You both regard Von Reibnitz as a sort of sea-going desperado, and he's nothing of the sort. He is a very polished and distinguished gentleman, and of noble blood on both sides of his family. If he's been wild, why, then so have lots of men. Anyhow, I'd rather catch one wild and tame him than have one that could never be anything but tame——"

"It's time for me to go," I said, rising.

"Don't be sore, Jack; I wasn't thinking of you when I spoke."

"You never do think of me. Au revoir, my dear."

CHAPTER IV

THE RELUCTANT KIDNAPPERS

Mr. Satterlie left for the East a few days later; and after he had gone I spent my time rather aimlessly, lunching and dining frequently with Coline and her aunt, hanging about the club, and drifting down quite often to the Union Iron Works for a chat with old Saltonstall. He seemed to take pleasure in my society, and we went out together a good deal.

On these occasions the captain played his rôle of elderly exquisite with a gusto which it was a delight to observe, and I was quick

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to discover that he liked to be considered a bit of a heart-breaker, though a more innocent old squire of dames, so far as actual behavior was concerned, it would have been impossible to find.

Another thing which I discovered to my amusement was that crabbed old Whistler, in his secret heart, was inordinately proud of his skipper, though he would have been roasted over a slow fire rather than acknowledge it. Whistler's father, I learned, had been a weaver of Aberdeen, and his brother a tailor of Edinburgh. Whistler knew good stuffs and advised carefully with the skipper in the selection of samples. It was a curious sight to watch the two, skipper and mate of a trading-schooner, sitting at the saloon-table, ankle deep in shavings, arguing over a litter of fashion-plates and samples.

My own advice was often anxiously sought and eagerly weighed, though Whistler would invariably end by disparaging it, this through so ill-concealed a jealousy as to have been amusing but for a certain pathos. He loved to watch us sally forth together, but would never accept any invitation of mine to accompany us.

"Y' are both too overdressed," he would say. "I would only be callin' attentions to your defeeciencies o' quiet taste."

"Oh, come, Mr. Whistler," Saltonstall would expostulate, "what can possibly be out of taste in this granite-colored cutaway and dove-colored spats and tie and gloves? It seems to me to possess a quiet elegance quite removed from any attempt at an ultra effect. Don't you think so, Jack?"

"It looks all right to me," I would answer, "but of course Mr. Whistler inherits a fine critical instinct from several generations of producers of fabrics. I think that we had better be guided by his judgment."

Such a remark as that never failed to fetch him. He would stuff his short briar, light it, scowl at the heap of tailor's rubbish for a moment, and observe:

"I wouldna' go so far as to say ye have not both a deal to learn in the matter o' dress. For instance, that coat o' Mister Hamilton's is of uncommon poor stuff—considerin' always the price that he no doubt paid for it. And as for the skipper, this suit he is wearin' is quite in keepin' for a horse-race or a dog-fight or such places as no doubt the two of ye frequent when y' are off speerin' around the town. Well—let it pass. When a mon is most of his life at sea he is too prone to grow weed and barnacles. After all, we are creatures o' the land and have neither gills nor webby feet. But befor' ye go up town ye had better give your troosies to Hop Singh, as the fule has not ironed them directly on the crease."

This is a sample of the sort of fun I had with these two men, who were both such children ashore and (as I found out later) such giants at sea..

None of us ever referred to the object of our cruise; no doubt each of us felt rather ashamed of it from his own particular point of view. Saltonstall hated the whole thing like poison and was doing his best to forget it until the time came to sail. Whistler hated it more on account of his Scotch caution and the idea that he might be drawn into some sort of legal controversy, than for anything else. I hated it because it impressed me more each day as futile and undignified.

As Coline said, there was something shamefully ridiculous in the idea of trying to mate a man and a woman as you might a pair of canary birds, by locking them up together in the same cage and then trusting to mere propinquity and natural instincts.

At any rate, I managed to get a good deal of comfort—and save my self-respect—out of the idea that I was going off on this voyage not as Coline's urgent suitor, but merely as a companion and protector. And I registered a quiet resolve not to say one single word of love to her until the cruise was over. In fact, I did rather intimate this to Saltonstall, who heartily approved my resolution.

"You are quite right, my dear fellow," said he warmly, and his big eyes bulged at me fairly brimming with benevolence. "Lovely woman should never be coerced. If we can't win her heart by chivalrous and unselfish devotion, then so much the worse for us. In fact, it was not until Mr. Satterlie had repeatedly assured me of your own high standards of honor and delicacy that I consented to be a party to his project. I have now come fully to understand that his lofty estimates of your character were not exaggerated"—and he made me a quaint, old-fashioned bow.

"There is one particular feature about the business which sticks in my thrapple," said I, dejectedly, "and that is the idea of

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Miss Satterlie being without any female companion. What if she should be ill?"

Saltonstall looked very much distressed. He nodded several times and tugged a bristle or two out of his enormous mustache.

"There is no doubt but that you are right," said he, drawing down his bushy eyebrows, "though I must admit that—eh—hem—" (he seemed to be about to choke) "ha—quite so—but what the deuce are we to do about it? It is a very uncommon and unconventional situation—but, on the other hand, there would be the danger of this female companion making it highly embarrassing for all of us. Even granted that a man were justified in kidnapping his own daughter for the sake of preventing her from falling into the clutches of a scoundrel and ruining her life, he would hardly be justified in detaining against her will some outside person. The whole wretched affair is deplorably irregular. Well, well—this is an odd world we live in," he finished with an embarrassed air, and flecked a shred of oakum from his immaculate trousers.

As our sailing day approached the poor skipper grew more and more restive, falling into moody silences from which he would emerge with a sudden "Ha—" and a violent tug at his mustache. Whistler had grudgingly consented to stick on, but appeared to be morose and fault-finding. The work on the vessel was finished and the appointments below decks were those of a comfortable, modern yacht.

Going down to the yard one day, I was astonished at the amount of stuff being loaded aboard; not only stores but bulky cases of what appeared to be general merchandise, among which was a big crate from a dealer in sporting goods. When I questioned the skipper about it he appeared so flustered that he was almost incoherent.

"Just a few things that we are taking out—ah, in the nature of a private commission—a few guns and—ah—equipments of various sorts, you understand—pardon me—" He thrust his reddened face over the hatch and called down in a voice quite different from his habitually genial tones—"Below there, look sharp now and get this dunnage stowed!"

I turned away with the idea that the worthy skipper had no doubt engaged in a little private trading venture of his own, which after all he might just as well have done, as there was plenty of hold space going to waste. Still, I did not see any reason for his being so embarrassed about it. Had I guessed what the old innocent was really up to, the expedition would have seen its finish then and there.

CHAPTER V

TWO BETRAYALS AND A SURPRISE

Coline's attitude rather surprised me also. "I'm really quite keen about it, Jack," said she. "For one thing, it will give me a chance to rest up and regain the elasticity of youth, which is getting badly stretched in supper and theatre parties. For another, it will be fun to see how you wear as a shipmate. Dad always says that you never know a person until you've made a long voyage together or wintered it out together in the wilderness. Then, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, you know him too well, and in the hundredth you can never know him well enough. I wonder which it's going to be, Jack?"

"As a rather poor gambler," I answered, "I'd advise you to play the long shot. It's so much more exciting when you win."

"But if I lose?"

"Then marry Von Reibnitz—and play a whole lot longer one."

"Are you going to make love to me every day?"

"No. But I'm going to love you every day."

Coline looked a little disturbed. "I believe I'll change my mind and not go," she said.

"I wish you would."

"You do? Why?"

"Because I think that there's something fishy about all this. Oh, look here, Coline, I'm going to 'fess up. No doubt your father thinks that he is acting for your best interests, and all of that, but after all you're entitled to your rights as a free agent, as soon as you come of age."

Coline's eyes opened very wide. No doubt my tone may have been a little brusk, for while talking to her I suddenly saw myself in the rôle of a deceitful sort of cad, and I didn't care for the picture. I loved Coline with all my heart, and as I sat there listening to her light-hearted banter I realized suddenly that I was absolutely incapable of carrying the deception any farther.

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"This voyage is all a fake," I said. "The scheme is to get you aboard the *Sabbath Day* for a supposed run to Sydney, then sail you around indefinitely, for the next six months perhaps, letting you go ashore only at places from which there is no regular communication with the outer world. In the meantime your father no doubt hopes to shelve Von Reibnitz in some way or trusts in your getting over your infatuation for him. So there you are. I've gone and blown the whole blooming conspiracy."

For a moment or two Coline stared at me in utter amazement. Then she threw back her head and laughed as if I had just told her the funniest joke in the world.

But the next second she was on her feet in front of me, dropped her two hands on my shoulders, her eyes looking straight into mine with a curious mistiness in their blue depths.

"You are a dear, Jack," she said, and I noticed that her lips were trembling. "And have you been going around all of this time with such a load on your conscience?"

"Yes," I answered, "and so have Saltonstall and Whistler. Your father skipped out for the East and left us to squirm. Anyhow, he seemed to think it a bit of a joke."

Coline dropped her hands from my shoulders, flung herself back into her chair, and laughed until I began to get a little peeved.

"It's the funniest thing I ever heard," said she. "Isn't it just like Dad, the old darling? And it's just like you, too, Jack."

"To lose my nerve?"

"No. Not to lose it. To lose me first."

"You can't lose something you never had."

"Perhaps. But you can lose something you'd hoped to have. Did you really think that in the end you might have got me, Jack?"

"No," I answered. "I never even hoped it, after our talk the other day. All I hoped was that we might manage to keep you from marrying Von Reibnitz."

"But what if I'd married somebody whom you and father and Captain Saltonstall approved?"

"In that case," I answered, "there would have been a scramble among the three of us to wish you all happiness."

Coline stared at me fixedly. I was watching her, too, and as I watched I saw a strange little contraction under the creamy skin of her throat and a fixed expression in her blue eyes. The next moment they filled with tears. I walked to the window.

"You—make me want to—cry—" said a tremulous voice behind me.

"Then go ahead and cry," I answered, without turning.

Instead of acting on my advice she began to laugh again. But this did not last very long, and presently she asked:

"What are you thinking about, Jack?"

"Nothing much," I answered.

"About me?" (Another nervous laugh.)

"No. I have started to break myself of that useless occupation. I am thinking about myself—wondering if I can get the yacht in commission and escape before your father returns."

"Why? You are not afraid of Dad, are you?"

"Not very. But I might say things to hurt his feelings."

"You couldn't do that. He likes you too much. You take too much for granted, Jack—or not enough."

Our conversation was interrupted at this point by a maid who came into the room with a card. Coline glanced at it, smiled, and handed it to me. It bore the inscription:

Anthony Saltonstall, Master Mariner.

"Oh, Lord!" I complained.

"Leave it to me, Jack," said Coline, and spoke to the maid. I looked out of the window until I heard a stately tread at the top of the stairs. Then I turned and watched Saltonstall as he presented Coline with a cluster of roses. She pinned them to her bodice.

"I hope that I am not intruding—?" he began.

"Angels often rush in," said Coline, "to show fools how to tread"—she glanced at me and her eyelid fluttered. (She loved to make the men she liked feel as if they were mechanical toys.) "When are we going to sail?"

Captain Saltonstall's clothes looked suddenly too large for him. He seemed to draw back into them like a turtle. And you may be sure that none of this was lost on Coline. He cast me an appealing look, and I turned my back on them both and looked out of the window. But the captain did not falter.

"We are all ready for sea," he answered, "and as soon as you wish to come aboard we shall get under way."

"Really?" cried Coline, and clapped her

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hands. "Oh, I'm so glad! Then may I come aboard to-morrow night?" And she looked up into his suffering face like a child begging to be taken on his shoulder.

Saltonstall snorted like a staid old thoroughbred horse who finds it trying after years of faithful domestic service when one of the younger children makes use of his tail as a swing.

I turned quickly to put an end to the farce. Since she could no longer have any intention of going aboard the schooner, after my betrayal of the plot, it seemed cruel and unnecessary to bait the poor old skipper.

Wherefore, I turned to explain that I had turned traitor and that the whole voyage was off, at which information I knew that Saltonstall would fairly neigh with joy. But when my eyes met those of Coline the expression which I saw arrested me, it was so fiercely enjoining my silence. So, rather sulkily, I turned to the window again while Coline returned to her feline tormenting of the captain.

"Won't we have a jolly voyage!" said she. "It's so much nicer with just you and Jack and Mr. Whistler and myself than if there were a lot of silly guests to get on one's nerves. They always get quarreling on a long voyage, but we could never quarrel, could we?"

"I *hope* not, my dear Miss Satterlie," answered Saltonstall, and the "hope" was dragged out into what resembled a moan.

"When do you think I may count on landing at Sydney?" Coline asked in a limpid voice. "My dearest chum lives there and I am dying to surprise her."

"Ah—eh—that I am afraid will—ha—depend on various circumstances," Saltonstall answered, miserably. "You must know that there are a few places where your father has directed me to call. Of course, the object of this voyage is known to us all, my dear young lady, so it is—hem—ha—hardly worth while to equivocate. Mr. Satterlie's hope is that the soft and fragrant breezes of the Pacific may—ha—blow away certain sentiments which you at present entertain and which he feels to be contrary to your best interests. Although somewhat beyond my instructions, I feel it only honorable to inform you that my orders from your father are that I am to make no haste in reaching Sydney unless you should—ha—do me the honor to assure me of a change of determination—or, at least a change of sentiment in regard to your attitude toward a certain person unnecessary to name. That is to say, you understand—" he maundered on—"that you no longer contemplate the bestowal of your hand upon this party whom your father feels to be most undesirable—hem—ha—" and the poor man mopped his forehead with a snowy and delicately scented handkerchief which bore his monogram embroidered on one corner.

I could have hugged the kind old fellow for what I knew he must have considered as a very dangerous lapse of duty to his employer. He was a man to whom the strict observance of instructions was firmly interwoven with his own personal honor. Yet here he was, practically warning the girl of what I had just told her in blunter language.

Coline must have appreciated this. Yet she merely wanted to put her power and his knightly nature to the test. To my surprise, however, she did not follow up her advantage, but merely said:

"Of course, as you say, we all know the real object of the voyage, and so there is no use to mince matters. Papa wants to force me upon Jack."

"Not a bit of it," I interrupted. "He wants to keep you away from Von Reibnitz."

Saltonstall took advantage of this diversion to make his escape. Breathing rather hard and with one or two smothered "ha's," he straightened his long legs in their beautifully ironed trousers and bowed.

"Then if you will permit me to wish you good-day, Miss Satterlie," said he, "I shall return to the yard and see that all is in readiness for your reception to-morrow night."

I looked expectantly at Coline.

"Very well, Captain. Then you may expect us aboard to-morrow evening. Mr. Hamilton will call for me and we will slip away like an eloping couple. Thank you for telling me what you have; it will make it much pleasanter for all of us."

Astonished as I was at this declaration, its effect on Saltonstall was even more pronounced. His big face actually contracted as if from a violent angina. Even Coline looked surprised.

"What is the matter, Captain Saltonstall?" she exclaimed. "You are not ill?"

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"Ha—h'm—a slight indisposition—nothing, I assure you—absolutely nothing. Permit me to wish you good afternoon—and you, my dear Jack."

"What's the game?" I asked, as soon as the captain was out of earshot.

Coline glanced at me with an expression of mock surprise on her rosy, dimpling face.

"Game?" she asked, with a rising inflection.

"Yes," I answered impatiently. "Why did you tell him that you were going?"

"For the simple reason that I am," she answered briefly.

"After what I've just told you?" I asked incredulously.

"Certainly. To tell the truth, Jack, I rather suspected that Dad had some such card up his sleeve, the dear old fox!"

"But surely you don't want to be a prisoner at sea for the next six months, do you? What do you want to go for anyhow?"

"Oh, for a lot of reasons. In the first place, I promised Dad that I would. In the second, it doesn't seem sportsmanlike to take advantage of two such innocents as you and poor old Anthony. And in the third, I want to see what is going to come of it all," said Coline.

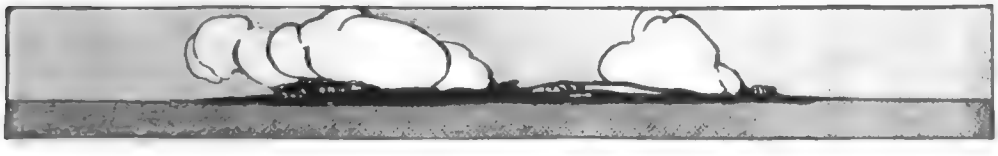
CHAPTER VI

IN PERIL OF SHARKS

That same afternoon, before going down to the yard, I called at my solicitors' to sign some papers and give final instructions as to the regulation of certain affairs during my proposed absence. The firm had its offices in a modern building occupied principally by lawyers; and as I was leaving the premises of my own legal advisers I came face to face with Whistler, in the act of emerging from a door across the corridor which bore the name of an old shark notorious for his cleverness in escaping the penalties of the law. All was fish (often dead and distinctly putrid) which came to old Craven's net, though his specialty was in maritime cases—salvage claims, wrecking, insurance, barratry.

My eyebrows went up a little when I met Whistler coming out of his lair. But if I was surprised, then Whistler was violently embarrassed, and to such an extent that I took advantage of his confusion to ask him point-blank what he was doing in such a rotten shop.

*The next instalment of "**Kidnapping Coline**" will appear in the October number.*



THE MARGIN OF SAFETY

Two of the most impressive sights of a railroad grading camp are the marvelous alacrity of the men in responding to the call for dinner and their quickness in wrapping themselves around their grub. During construction of the new lines of the Louisville & Nashville in Kentucky an old farmer furnished one of the grading camps with vegetables. He often arrived at the camp at meal-time, and was greatly impressed with the voracity of the men. When the call for dinner was given every man made a rush for the table and the food disappeared in double quick time.

One day a workman on his way to the table tripped on the root of a tree and fell. He lay all sprawled out, making no attempt to rise. The farmer in great concern rushed to him.

"Are you hurt, are you hurt?" he asked anxiously.

"No," answered the man.

"Well, why don't you get up and go to dinner?"

"No use," returned the other sadly, "it's too late now."

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Little Lightning

by Elizabeth Harding Snyder

ILLUSTRATIONS
BY
R. M. CROSBY

IT RATHER ANNOYED LITTLE LIGHTNING AT FIRST TO BE STARED AT FROM THE VERANDA OF THE COUNTRY CLUB.

STUART KANE was a social problem. Perhaps his failure to realize this fact was responsible for the entire situation; but then a boy of eighteen, particularly a boy of his easy-going, non-analytic disposition, could not be expected to know that, certain superficial requirements being fulfilled, a new boy in any community is a problem, and that, after giving the newcomer an interval in which he can work out his own solution, the community is very apt to take a hand in the matter.

When a number of inducements, among them the combination of suburban life with accessibility to the city, caused the Kane family to take up their abode in Lindenhurst, Mrs. Kane had immediately arranged her own social relations to her satisfaction through the medium of a long-standing friendship with one of the older residents, and Mr. Kane had torn his attention from business long enough to join the Country Club. That left Stuart.

His mother had made an unsuccessful attempt to adjust matters when they had been about two weeks in Lindenhurst. "Stuart," she had said, "Mrs. Norton says she'll have some of the boys and girls over there for you to meet, if you care to."

"Oh, no, tell her not to bother," said the

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boy in alarm. "I can get acquainted with the fellows over at the Country Club."

"Yes, but the girls—" began his mother.

"Oh, I don't like girls," cut in the boy. If he had told the exact truth, he would have said that he was unreservedly afraid of girls. That was before he had met the exception—but only a day or two before.

She was a little thing with auburn curls, large blue eyes, and a tip-tilted nose. She did things with her hands and shoulders when she talked, and she caught her under-lip between her teeth and made her eyes very round. What appealed to him most was the fact that she dared to wear pink—vivid pink—with that color hair. In his heart of hearts he knew that her mother probably "got her up" and she meekly wore anything she was told to—still the effect was audacious, and, as yet, he hadn't allowed himself to penetrate beyond the effect.

He had met her somewhere back of the Club paddock, trying to disengage pink ribbons from the embrace of a barbed-wire fence. A conversation had ensued, vaguely apprehensive on her part—correspondingly self-conscious on his. Both confessed to having noticed the other "around."

"You're from New York—aren't you?" she asked.

The boy admitted the fact and sustained without annoyance the glance which was an inventory and a tribute as well.

"I would have known it anyway," said the girl.

"Why?" he asked.

"Oh," said the girl, "it's just something about you — something almost — almost——"

"What?"

"Wicked," said the girl with a faint smile.

The boy laughed.

"Every one from New York isn't wicked," he said.

"No," she answered, "not every one."

He laughed again, vaguely pleased with this new aspect of himself.

"But what makes you think I am?" he pursued. "Is it my — er — appearance, or——"

"Perhaps it's a *little* your clothes, but there's something else."

"I don't see what it is," he said. The girl smiled enigmatically.

"I suppose you think it's horribly slow here—after——"

"Oh, no," he protested, a shade too po-

BUT BOYS OF HIS OWN AGE REGARDED HIM WITH GREAT ADMIRATION.

litely, "I don't know many of the fellows yet—but——"

"But, of course, they'd be rather dull," she suggested. "You're sort of—different."

He didn't remember just how it developed. Perhaps it was due to the fact that he didn't wish to take the trouble to alter her impression; perhaps he felt that he would lose a certain distinction if he did so, but his inclination was to accept her valuation of himself and simply follow up the threads she had put into his hands. He saw no reason why he should not be wicked and mildly superior, on that account, to the

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other boys of Lindenhurst, particularly when she confided to him that she herself found them rather tame on occasions.

Then he found himself sitting beside her on a fallen log talking rapidly about himself. It is only just to record that he tried twice to change the subject, but she refused to be diverted.

The question which occupied her was why he was so wicked. She disregarded his suggestion that he was just naturally born that way, and finally came to the conclusion that it was because he had no sister. He needed a sister's influence, some one to keep him out of mischief.

He, however, wasn't so sure he wanted to be kept out of mischief. Then she explained that she would be only too happy to dedicate herself to the task, but there was her reputation to be considered.

He eagerly agreed that she couldn't be expected to sacrifice herself on his account. But he had hit upon an unfortunate word. Perhaps, she said, it was her duty to sacrifice herself. If she were very careful no one would know the difference—yes, plainly she ought to sacrifice herself.

He protested politely, but firmly, against such an outrage. She gazed steadily into space, scarcely hearing him. Why, she had asked dreamily, were wicked men like him so much more fascinating than the good ones?

What could he say in the face of a question of that sort? In a remarkably short time it was all arranged: They were to meet again, the present location being as good as any, and he was to confess everything wicked that he had ever done. Then she told him that her name was Elise, and he supplied his.

He had departed from his interview, wondering in a dazed way how it had all come about. Here he was, engaged to recount the tales of his depravity to a young person, who in return was to take a sisterly interest in his affairs. His life up to this point had been that of the average boy of his age—no better, scarcely worse.

He spent most of that evening going over his adventures and concocting a carefully edited, not to say expurgated, account which would be suited to her innocent ears. He had grown rather annoyed at the whole incident by this time.

The next afternoon, very conventionally attired in white flannels, he strolled across the paddock and into the grove beyond. He had to wait a moment or two before she came into sight, around a clump of birches.

With remarkable dispatch, she disposed of the formality of the occasion. Again he found himself seated on the fallen log. "Now begin at the beginning," she ordered.

Haltingly he launched out upon the expurgated edition. It was much the usual tale of systematic annoyance of those in authority, pitched battles with equals and inferiors, much vaudeville, one prize fight, and one cherished memory when he had been arrested for speeding. As the tale progressed, he could see that his listener was frankly disappointed; she even began to hunt for four-leaf clovers in the grass at her feet.

This would never do. Recklessly he threw in the missing details. She abandoned her search for clover-leaves and gave him her undivided attention; her eyes grew rounder and rounder and she shivered delightedly.

Then he came to a full stop. He suddenly realized that he had brought the entire account up to date. There was no more to tell.

"Is that all?" she asked. He admitted that it was. Then she looked at him reproachfully and turned slowly away.

"I know you are keeping something back," she said. He denied it vehemently.

"But I know you are—why, those things weren't so very wicked. They were just fun—and maybe a *little* bad."

He looked at her aghast. Then he took the fatal step. Perhaps, he admitted, he *was* keeping something back.

He was instantly restored to favor, and she besought him to reveal the secret at once. He temporized. He couldn't tell her to-day; there were reasons. To-morrow perhaps. Then she coaxed and threatened alternately, but he remained firm. He was surprised at his own strength of mind—until it occurred to him that he couldn't divulge that which he didn't know.

Finally they separated and he solemnly swore to be on hand the next afternoon, prepared to confess all. Just how he came to promise he was unable to recall; he had fully intended that this should be the last interview. Quite to the contrary, it became the first of a series.

All his bona-fide escapades having been

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exhausted, he was forced to invent new ones; in fact, he was becoming a first-class liar. Elise listened with round eyes to his exploits and then lectured him mildly.

The boy rapidly outgrew the distaste which had followed upon his first meetings. He began to count upon these incidents as rather pleasant interludes in what might otherwise have been a very dull existence.

Elise also was sensible to the charm of these daily interviews. Elise had a taste for the new and unusual. She also had the instinct for monopoly which usually accompanies it; consequently she very prudently took steps to insure her claims —for so long as she wished to press them.

Her opportunity arrived one afternoon, when she was seated upon the club-house veranda, conversing with one of the youths of Lindenhurst and another girl of her own age. The talk suddenly veered toward the new arrival. The other girl had suddenly opened the subject.

"I wonder why that Kane boy doesn't come to the dances. I'd like to meet him—he looks interesting. Don't you know him, Bobby?"

Elise broke in before the boy could answer. "But, my dear, he's hardly a nice sort of boy to know."

"Why not?" demanded the other girl.

"Well he's rather awful," said Elise. "Fast—and all that."

"How do you know?"

Elise was rather slow to answer. "I have a friend who knows about him in New York."

"Well," said the girl, "I want to meet him anyway—I never knew a wicked boy. They must be fascinating."

"But," said Elise, with her eye sternly fixed upon Bobby, "none of the boys would introduce a boy of that sort to any girl."

Bobby moved uneasily. "I scarcely know him—" he began.

"No," said Elise, "he told some one he thought the boys here were too awfully tame."

"Well," said Bobby after a pause, "I don't think he's the sort a fellow would care to introduce to a girl."

It was directly following upon this conversation that Stuart Kane began to notice a decided change in the atmosphere about him. Suddenly and without the least preparation, he found himself rated the worst boy in Lindenhurst—with a reputation to sustain. It rather annoyed him at first to be stared at from the veranda of the Country Club; he was naturally bashful. But as they confined their attention to staring, he rapidly outgrew this distaste. He soon considered it his prerogative to be stared at.

"I SAY, MR. BERWIND," HE BEGAN, "KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT GIRLS?"

As yet the loneliness of his position had not oppressed him. He was treated with an amused tolerance by the older men, because he *could* play polo. But the boys of his own age regarded him with a covert admiration, even while they held themselves aloof.

It was about this time that his nickname was presented to him. It had originated, as such things do, from no known source, as an allusion to his reputation for fastness, and "Little Lightning" became his appellation about Lindenhurst.

Mrs. Kane, seeing him apparently quite happy, supposed him to be forming his

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own connections and made no second attempt to interfere in his affairs, aside from a casual questioning which he found easy to parry.

There remained Elise. His relations with her were rapidly approaching a crisis. One day it arrived.

"Do you know," said Elise, "I think I'm doing you good—I really do. You used to do these things, but you don't do them any more. Why you're really not at all bad now, You're just like the others."

With great violence he protested that she was mistaken, that he was wicked and that that was all there was about it.

"But you never do anything bad. Now what have you done since yesterday that was bad?"

The boy cleared his throat and, after a scarcely perceptible hesitation, plunged in. This sort of thing was coming far more easily to him now.

For once she seemed almost unconvinced. "But no one ever sees you doing anything bad—that's just what they were all saying the other day."

He only raised his shoulders expressively, but at that moment he decided that some one certainly was going to see him do something bad. Just what form this wickedness should take he found it difficult to decide.

He began by sitting on the paddock fence for two nights until one o'clock before he went home. Unfortunately, every one was out or in bed when he arrived the first night, so that it was of little avail; but the second night his mother telephoned twice to the Country Club to discover his whereabouts and the next morning every one was wondering where he had been.

Then he took to drinking—not heavily, for a very small amount could be counted on to have the desired effect. He ostentatiously rode all the worst ponies in the club stables and used vivid language. In fact he became thoroughly obnoxious, and even Elise was shocked, despite her sisterly attitude.

"HAVEN'T I RISKED ALL SORTS OF THINGS TO MAKE YOU BETTER?"

She didn't exactly abandon the idea of reforming him—she still felt confident in her ability to do that—but there was a limit even to wickedness, or ought to be, she thought. This puzzled the boy. Somehow he felt it to be rather ungrateful of her.

The more he thought about it, the more ill-used he felt. Then he decided to adopt stringent measures. On a certain afternoon he was deliberately late to his appointment. Fully ten minutes after the usual time, he sauntered leisurely across the Country Club

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lawn. Outside the stables a man was looking over a new pony.

"Hello, Lightning," he said, looking up.

"Hello, Mr. Berwind," said the boy. "That's a new one—let's try her."

The man looked him over thoughtfully. "Why—er—the fact is, Lightning, you're not looking exactly fit. You could ride her all right—ordinarily—but you'd better not."

"Rot," said the boy.

"Rot nothing." The man drew his finger across the dark circles under the boy's eyes and felt the relaxed muscles of his arm.

"Cut it out, Lightning," he said, and turned into the stable door.

The boy laughed and stepped up to the groom. "Give me that bridle," he said.

"Sorry, sir," began the man, "but Mr. Berwind——"

"Bother Mr. Berwind," said the boy, possessing himself of the animal and mounting hastily.

The pony proved a handful. She whirled unexpectedly and bucked, and the boy had an annoying feeling of unsteadiness. His usual confidence somehow was lacking. As he rode up to the stables again he avoided looking toward the open door. Then suddenly a girl's voice remarked, "Look at that seat"—and, after a pause, "Disgusting!"

He whirled sharply and faced her as she stood in the doorway talking to the Berwind man. She was quite tall and wore a khaki habit and wide-brimmed Panama.

"Cross - saddle," thought the boy. "Wouldn't you know it?" He threw the reins to the groom and turned away.

"Well, Lightning," called Mr. Berwind, "how'd you find her?"

"Good enough," said the boy, looking back.

The girl said something in a low voice to Mr. Berwind. The man hesitated for a moment and the situation threatened to become awkward. Then he gave a short laugh.

"Well, why not?" he said. "Er—Miss Burden, may I present Mr. Kane?" The boy bowed stiffly.

She looked him over without a trace of embarrassment and then nodded. "I've heard of Mr. Kane," said she.

The boy noted with malicious satisfaction that she had freckles—lots of them. He also noted that she had fine eyes. With a smile at Mr. Berwind—the boy called it a grin—she turned and walked over to the new pony. Taking the reins from the groom, she mounted and put her through her paces.

Mr. Berwind laughed. "Good seat," he

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said, and regarded the boy quizzically.

The boy scowled. "Oh, good enough," he said, and turned on his heel.

He strode away across the paddock and disappeared among the trees beyond. The girl's tone stuck in his mind as he walked. No one had ever told him to his face that he was disgusting before; no one but a hoyden of that sort would.

"It's no lady's trick," he decided, and sat down upon the fallen log, consumed by what he fatuously believed to be utter disgust.

Elise was nowhere to be seen, and into his sweeping and indiscriminate dissatisfaction with the world at large intruded the idea that perhaps she had decided not to meet him.

He was becoming thoroughly indignant. He hadn't wanted to talk about himself in the beginning, and now that she had brought him to form the habit, it was rather shabby of her to desert him, just as he was becoming most interested in the topic. Then, too, her not coming rather spoiled the effect of his being late.

Just as he was about to leave she arrived, very flushed and breathless. "Oh, I've had such a perfectly horrid time," she cried. "I simply couldn't get away from Fräulein."

"I thought you weren't coming," said the boy.

"I've only come to tell you that I can't come again—ever."

"Why?" he asked.

She looked at him very solemnly. "Mother knows everything," she said. "She's furious—perfectly raging."

"Because you've been meeting me?"

Elise nodded and wrapped a curl around her finger. "Some one saw us," she explained, "and of course she told mother—she thought she ought to know."

"I see," said the boy.

Elise looked at him regretfully. "If you only weren't so bad," she said.

He looked up quickly. "I say, Elise, I'm not so awful—really."

"Oh, Stuart," she said, "you're dreadful—perfectly dreadful."

"You seem to want me to be dreadful," he blurted out.

"Oh — how can you? Stuart Kane, haven't I risked all sorts of things to make you better? Just look at all the trouble I've gotten into on your account." She turned her back squarely upon him and made odd little noises under her hat.

"You're not crying, are you?" he asked.

"Don't touch me."

"I wasn't going to—really, I wasn't." He sat on the log—utterly at sea. Elise continued to make odd noises.

"I say, Elise, I'm dreadfully sorry," he said. She turned to him, not visibly deranged by her emotion.

"Then I have helped you?" she asked.

"Darned if I know," muttered the boy.

Elise looked at him thoughtfully. "You won't do anything awful, will you?"

"When?"

"When you can't see me any more?"

"Why, I—er—I hadn't thought of it," said the boy.

Elise settled her hat with an air of finality. "I must go now," she said. "I hope you won't do anything *very* awful."

"But I'm not going to do anything at all."

"Oh, Stuart, do you expect me to believe that?"

The boy was frankly bewildered. Plainly it was expected of him, under the circumstances, to do something awful. He was tempted to ask Elise just what sort of exhibition was customary, and yet he hesitated to reveal his inexperience.

She came and stood very close to the log. "You see it wasn't my fault," she said. "If it wasn't for mother, I'd just love to help you."

"Oh, of course you couldn't be expected to get into hot water on my account."

Elise's tone conveyed infinite reproach. "Oh, you surely can't think that I'd stop on that account."

The boy looked up. "Well, then, why do you?"

She returned his gaze without a tremor. "I simply can't deceive my mother," she said.

"*What?*"

Elise repeated her assertion. "She said she trusted me implicitly," she added. The boy's head reeled. He was at a loss to account for the difference involved between the sort of deception which had been practised up to this time and the variety which Elise now nobly refused to commit. He dismissed the point finally as a technicality which he could not grasp.

"Well," said Elise, "we may as well get it over with." She held out her hand and the boy rose quickly. "Good-by," she said.

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"Good-by," he answered, stiffly.

There was a pause.

"I—I'll always remember you," said Elise.

"Thanks."

"Good-by." Elise turned and walked slowly away. Just before she reached the clump of birches she looked back, but the boy was already striding across toward the paddock fence.

As he cut across the stable yard his pace steadily diminished. Involved mental processes were not in his line. He had been thinking heavily ever since he left Elise, and still the only visible outcome seemed to be a growing paralysis of his legs. Finally he came to a dead stop.

It was here that Mr. Berwind came upon him, as he emerged from the stables for the twentieth time that day. Something in the boy's attitude brought a repressed twitch to the corners of his mouth. He strolled up casually behind him.

"Hello, Lightning," he said, "I'll take you on at singles from five till dinner."

The boy turned quickly. "Clean off my game," he demurred. "Haven't played for weeks."

The man had spoken on impulse, but the pleased look in the boy's eyes made him insist. "Practise up on me," he said; "I'm no end of a duffer. You cut along home and change—I'll sign for the court."

"It's your own funeral," said the boy, but he moved off a pace or two toward the road.

"That's the only sort I ever attend," said the man. "Oh, I say, Lightning——"

"Yes?"

"You'll be sure and wear your blazer? I want to be able to see you coming——"

"Are you trying to kid me?" inquired the boy, and he turned away again with a smile that lasted most of the way home.

He hastily changed to his tennis clothes —then he couldn't find his racket, and when he finally discovered it under the chiffonier, it was five minutes to five. He dashed down-stairs and out at the front door. A roadster stood in the driveway.

"Who's that for?" he asked.

"Your father, sir," said the man, moving off.

"Well, get him something else—I'm in a fiendish hurry," and he was half-way to the gate before something about special orders was called after him.

"Dad will be hot," he decided. He wondered why he was so anxious to keep this particular appointment. Then it occurred to him that no one had asked him to do anything for some time, and a depressing sense of loneliness stole over him.

He met Mr. Berwind on the club-house steps. "Oh, there you are," said that gentleman. "My racket's in my locker; I'll be along in a minute. It's court number five."

Something in the casual tone restored the boy's spirits. The man acted as if it were not at all unusual to play tennis with social outcasts.

As he crossed the drive a car drove up. The chauffeur leaned back and addressed the lady in the tonneau. "There he goes—that's him."

"Oh," said the lady, and the boy was uncomfortably conscious of her stare. He waited for Berwind.

"Who's the human lorgnette in the car?" he asked.

Berwind turned and then bowed to the lady, who was alighting at the steps. "That's Mrs. Mortimer," he laughed. "What's she got on you?"

"Is Elise Mortimer her daughter?"

"Why, yes—know Elise?"

"I know her when I see her."

"Nice girl, Elise," said the man.

"Good for her," said the boy, and he whistled through his teeth.

They were well matched, after the boy had worked into his game, and a deuce set kept them well on to dinner-time.

"I haven't had half enough," said Berwind. "How about four to-morrow?"

"You're on," said the boy.

They strolled along toward the showers, conversing lazily. Suddenly an idea struck the boy. "I say, Mr. Berwind," he began, "know anything about girls?"

"Just a little," laughed the man. "Do you?"

"Oh, no—I let them alone."

"Wise boy," said the man. "Er—why did you ask me that?"

"Oh, I just wondered about something."

"What—for instance?"

"Well, I wondered how it feels to be chucked over."

"By a girl, you mean?"

"Um—yes," said the boy.

The man laughed again. "And you expect me to tell you my heart-breaking expe-

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riences—and all that sort of thing?"

"Hardly that," said the boy. "Only I wondered if a fellow wouldn't be likely to—er—to act up."

"For instance?"

"Oh, something rather desperate, I suppose," said the boy, wishing he hadn't opened the subject.

"I don't get you, Lightning."

"Oh, hang it, I mean if you'd been seeing a lot of a girl and—er—she decided to cut your acquaintance, would you be likely to do something—well—reckless?"

"Like jumping into the river?" said the man, with difficulty controlling the muscles of his mouth.

"Oh, I thought it might be enough to get drunk or run away or something."

"Is that the way you feel about it, Lightning?"

"Oh, no—I don't feel that way, but I thought maybe I ought to."

The man threw back his head and gave himself unreservedly to mirth.

The boy waited patiently. "Think you'll have another?" he inquired.

"Another what?" asked Berwind, wiping his eyes.

"Fit," said the boy. "You wouldn't like a drink or anything?"

The man pulled his features into some semblance of gravity. "No, Lightning," he said, "and you take it from me—the first families don't go in heavily for melodrama."

The boy straightened his shoulders and gave a sigh of relief. "It does seem a bit crude," he reflected.

Somehow he felt reinstated in his own self-respect. Elise had made him feel lacking in his sensibilities. He retaliated by thinking her methods rather elementary.

Partly by accident, partly by mutual design, he had never come face to face with Elise in the presence of witnesses. Although, like every one else in Lindenhurst, they did everything but sleep and occasionally eat at the Country Club, they had utterly different haunts. While Elise could be discovered in the reading-room and was very much in evidence in the ballroom during the evening, the boy seldom penetrated beyond the smoking and billiard rooms and was far more at home in the stables.

It was with something very like consternation that he emerged from a train of thought just in time to realize that she was approaching him along the driveway. It was, moreover, too late to retreat. She was accompanied by another girl and a tall, thin youth.

The boy came on as unconcernedly as possible—which made a passable exhibition, thanks to his training. When he was within a few feet he looked up.

"Hello, Lightning," mumbled the youth, with a vague, fin-like gesture. The other girl gazed curiously, but Elise never raised her eyes.

The boy felt an unaccustomed warmth about his face and neck. He shoved his hands deeper into his pockets and walked on. Of course he hadn't expected her to speak. It had been understood between them that she shouldn't, but he hadn't imagined it was going to be like this. A fierce resentment took possession of him, and again arose the question of his social status—happily forgotten overnight.

He was so engrossed in his problem that he found himself mounting the front steps of the club-house and headed straight for a group of girls and boys by the doorway. He marched doggedly on. One thing he was certain of: He didn't intend to be the recipient of any more vague greetings from tall, thin youths.

Just as he was entering the doorway he saw the Burden girl. She was attired in the khaki riding-habit again and was talking rapidly to a group of boys. As he passed, some one spoke his name and he looked up. Unaccountably, he caught her eye.

"Hello," she said in the most matter-of-fact tone, and then continued to the boy beside her: "But he absolutely refused at the water-jump. I almost—" That was all he heard.

He bolted into the smoking-room and sank into a chair. What could the girl mean by speaking to him thus publicly? He felt ridiculously grateful.

Then a sinister thought asserted itself. "She said I was disgusting," he recalled.

For fully an hour he pondered undisturbed; then a crowd of men drifted in from the tennis-courts and he slipped out at the side door and made for the stables. Mr. Berwind met him half-way down the cinder walk. "Oh, I say, Lightning," he said, "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid we'll have to call off that tennis for to-day—polo practise."

"Too bad," said the boy.

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The man hesitated. "Er—why don't you play, Lightning? We need a substitute forward."

"They'd fire me out."

"Not on your life. I say—beat it down to the grounds and try a few jumps and things to get into form. Your seat's a bit unsteady lately—but you know why."

The boy turned quickly away. "Maybe I will," he said.

He lost very little time carrying out the suggestion. The course was clear when he arrived, and he was unreservedly thankful. He wasn't quite sure of his nerve, for one thing, and if he did come a cropper, he preferred it to be without any spectators.

As he cleared one or two jumps he gained confidence and decided to finish up with a little run across country. He jumped the boundary and started across lots at an easy canter. Half-way to the next fence, he heard the muffled triple thud of a horse galloping on turf, and when he looked over his shoulder he was not surprised to see the Burden girl coming up behind him. He kept briskly on. So he was disgusting—and he had a rotten seat?

Ahead loomed a low wall. There was a clear space, and beyond it was overgrown with brush, rising to almost twice its height. He had intended skimming the cleared space, but with the hoof-beats of the other horse in his ears he swerved sharply and made for the brush. He saw as he approached that it was quite a respectable jump. He had his doubts about making it, but he couldn't turn back now. He scorned to come down to a trot and jockey for a landing, but he did ease off a trifle on his canter until within a few yards—then he threw up the horse's head, let out the reins, and thundered at it.

He rose swiftly and leaned backward, giving the forelegs a chance to clear. He felt the jar as the horse crashed through the brush. Then he slipped his stirrup and found himself sitting on the grass a few yards away.

A moment later the Burden girl rose over the opening and reined in quickly.

AS SHE CROSSED OVER TO WHERE HE SAT, SHE STOOPED AND PICKED UP A CROP. "YOURS?" SHE ASKED.

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"Good thing you didn't try it," he said ruefully.

"Yes," she answered, "I knew you'd go off and I was afraid I'd land on you. Hurt?"

"No," he said, shortly.

He got up and dusted his clothing.

"Then I'll collect the horse—" and she was gone.

He sat down on a stone and wondered what he'd say when she came back. Never before had he felt quite so ridiculous. Of course that was all a bluff about taking that jump, and still it didn't alter the fact that he had acted like an idiot.

It was several minutes before she returned, leading his horse. He watched her dismount and throw the bridles over a stump without making a move to help her.

As she crossed over to where he sat she stooped and picked up a crop. "Yours?" she asked.

"Oh, hardly," he said, rising. "Did you try the cow over there?"

"The cow says it isn't hers, but that she thought she saw you drop it."

The boy flushed.

"Not mad, are you?" she asked—then, after a pause: "Think it will ever amount to anything?"

"What?"

"Your grouch. I wouldn't want it to become chronic."

He smiled in spite of himself and caught the crop as it swung toward him. "Much obliged," he remarked.

She coolly sat down on his stone. "It wasn't so bad," she said, "considering."

"Considering what?"

"Considering the fall you might have had."

"Oh!"

"Of course it's none of my business, but I'd go easy for a while."

"Easy on what?"

"Jumps and polo—until you get into form."

"Oh," he remarked incautiously, "I thought you meant——"

"Drinking and bad language and late hours?" she asked.

"Figuratively speaking—yes," he said.

"That goes without saying."

He gazed across the fields, which was the best thing he could have done.

"You know, you *could* ride like a streak."

"Thanks—so much."

"Don't be sarcastic."

A pause ensued; then she looked up, grinning impishly. "Why do they call you 'Little Lightning'?" she asked.

He started to explain, hesitated—started again, and then gave it up. "It's just a habit they've gotten into," he said at last.

She burst into a boyish laugh. "You know," she said, "that's the most hopeful thing I've heard yet."

He didn't answer.

"You rather fancy yourself as the village cut-up, don't you?" she pursued.

Thoroughly exasperated, he turned and looked over her insolently from head to foot. "Yes, and I'm disgusting, and I'm a rotten rider—please may I go home now?"

For reply, she laughed again. "You could have gone ten minutes ago for all of me," she said, "although you might have had to walk."

He dropped his eyes quickly. "I'm sorry I appear ungrateful," he said.

She grinned again. "You don't—now," she said. "Come on, let's go back."

She waited while he brought up her horse, and even accepted his ironically proffered assistance in mounting; then she asked questions about polo and allowed him to give her a quantity of superfluous information. As they emerged upon the road he was almost in a good humor.

"Don't you dance?" she asked, suddenly.

"Yes—why?"

"I never see you over at the club-house in the evening."

"I never come."

"Why not?" she persisted.

"I should think you'd know."

"I see no reason why not."

"Well, if you insist on my saying it, no one would care to dance with me."

"But there's nothing the matter with you."

"*What?*"

"I said," she repeated, "there's nothing the matter with you."

"Then why don't the fellows fall on my neck?"

"Because they think you'll consider them tame—they take it out in being superior."

"Is that straight?"

"Sure thing."

He pondered a moment. "But they think I'm a bad lot," he said.

"Well, didn't you work for it?"

He didn't answer immediately. "Well,

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"WELL," SAID MRS. MORTIMER, "I THINK IT'S ALL DUE TO ELISE'S INFLUENCE."

it's done now," he said at last, resignedly.

"Not necessarily."

"Why not?"

"All you have to do is to calm down and make the advances."

"But there are the girls," he pointed out. "The fellows never would introduce me to the girls."

She laughed. "Far be it from me to tell you why," she said. "But I'll introduce you to one or two."

"Will you?"

"Sure thing."

"When?"

"To-night."

He looked at her steadily for a moment. "You're on," he said, finally.

They separated at the Club, and the boy hurried homeward.

At half-past eight, promptly, he presented himself at the club-house. His coming produced almost a sensation.

"Look, Elise," some one said, "there's that Kane boy dancing with Dorothy Burden."

Elise gasped, but the speaker moved away. "They've stopped dancing," she announced, "and I want to ask Dorothy something." It was surprising how many girls wanted to ask Dorothy something.

The blazered habitués of the veranda railing held themselves distrustfully. It was not until the middle of the evening that the boy sauntered up and asked for a cigarette.

"I'm afraid these are pretty average rotten," demurred the youth addressed.

"Good enough for me," said the boy. "Any one got a match? I'm awfully fussy about the sort of matches I use."

They laughed noisily. The boy smoked through two dances—left open for the particular purpose by Miss Burden's advice. The conversation was desultory, but amiable.

"I say—" ventured one of the worldly minded, glancing at the boy's attire, "are they really going to wear white 'tux'? "

"Oh," said the boy, "I guess we'll all go on wearing pretty much what we darn please." And he grinned confidentially at the enlightened few.

And so the situation evaporated as far as he was concerned, and he dismissed it from his mind. He even forgot to be grateful—in fact, that was the worst charge against him. It came out, as such things will, at an inquest held a few afternoons later on the club-house veranda.

Perhaps if Mrs. Mortimer had not been

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late, his case would never have been called. But Mrs. Mortimer *was* late—very late—and she sank guiltily into a chair and pulled at her gloves, looking everywhere but at her partner, while Mrs. Winterfeldt made up the cards disapprovingly.

"I'm awfully sorry I'm late," began Mrs. Mortimer.

"There goes that Kane boy," said her partner discouragingly. So much for fate. Mrs. Mortimer dashed into the opening.

"Of course I told you all about Elise?" she said, casually.

"That child?" inquired her partner.

Mrs. Winterfeldt put down the cards. "Fancy Elise!" she said.

Mrs. Mortimer continued. "I really didn't know anything about him," she said, "until a friend called me up one morning and said that she had seen Elise with him twice and that it was her duty to tell me about it."

"That sounds like Mrs. Ellison," broke in Mrs. Winterfeldt's partner.

"Cut, please," said Mrs. Winterfeldt.

Mrs. Mortimer languidly obeyed. "Your deal," she announced.

"And what did you do about it?" asked her partner.

"Why, first of all I found out what was the matter with the Kane boy."

"You mean you didn't *know?*"

"Not a thing—they haven't been here long, have they?"

"Several months. They've taken the Lorimer place."

"What *is* the matter with him?" inquired the dummy, leisurely putting down her hand.

Mrs. Winterfeldt leaned over the table. "Why, he's terribly fast," she said. "They call him 'Little Lightning.' "

Mrs. Mortimer's partner lowered her voice. "It's all his mother's fault," she said. "She simply pays no attention to him."

Mrs. Winterfeldt gathered up the cards and pushed them toward Mrs. Mortimer.

"Three odd," she said, and turned to her partner. "They had that king, you see—and I had all those clubs. I'm awfully sorry for that boy—he's rather good-looking, too."

Mrs. Mortimer's partner dealt the cards vigorously. "They say he drinks a lot more than is good for him," she said.

"Just how much is supposed to be good for a boy of his age?" asked Mrs. Winterfeldt.

"What about Elise?" said the dealer, ignoring the question as irrelevant.

"Why, I couldn't make her out," said Mrs. Mortimer. "She admitted having seen him. She said he behaved quite nicely."

"They always do," said Mrs. Winterfeldt.

"Of course I told her that he wasn't a proper person for her to know and that I expected that to be the end of it."

"And what did Elise say?"

"She said," continued Mrs. Mortimer, looking around the table, "that people didn't understand him."

"Oh, how perfectly dreadful! I don't wonder you're worried," said Mrs. Winterfeldt's partner.

"I forbade her to see him again," said Mrs. Mortimer. "I told her I trusted her implicitly. Then I gave Fräulein strict orders not to let her out of her sight, and I got Kennedy to point him out to me."

Mrs. Winterfeldt sighed reflectively. "You know," she said, "I don't think that boy's half what they make him out. He's been coming to the dances every night and behaving beautifully lately."

Mrs. Mortimer leaned forward. "That's just the point," she said impressively. "How long has he been behaving himself?"

"Oh, almost a week," said Mrs. Winterfeldt.

"But he didn't before," said Mrs. Mortimer.

"No—he was rather awful before," Mrs. Winterfeldt admitted.

"Well," said Mrs. Mortimer, "I think it's all due to Elise's influence."

"I never thought of that," said Mrs. Winterfeldt.

"Do you think it wise to interrupt their friendship just when he's showing such good effects?" inquired Mrs. Mortimer's partner.

"Suppose that Burden girl should get hold of him," said Mrs. Winterfeldt.

"Isn't she a hoyden!"

Mrs. Mortimer frowned. "That's the odd part of it all," she said. "When I saw how nicely he was behaving and how they all seemed to like him, I told Elise that if she met him here at the club-house with the others I saw no reason——"

"And of course she was awfully pleased," broke in Mrs. Winterfeldt's partner.

"She said," Mrs. Mortimer stated forbiddingly, "that she didn't care to see him anywhere—that he was the most ungrateful boy she ever knew."

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The JUMPING BAMBOO

The Quest of the Sorcerer's Stone leads to a Strange Death-trap

By

BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHARLES SARKA

TO ENTER an unknown, hostile town in the heart of New Guinea—to have trouble over a village beauty, see a sorcerer restore the dead to life, discover a huge diamond, and be involved in a sudden death—all within twenty-four hours—is adventure enough for any one. Enough even for the Marquis.

It was more than enough for me—I do not go out looking for adventures, any more than I suppose a confectioner's boy would go out looking for cakes; and for the same reason—I am sick of them. I go looking for gold, as a rule; sometimes I find it, and sometimes don't. If I do, I can have a good time with it in Sydney or Melbourne; if I don't, I can look again. But I never saw the adventure that you could pay in over the counter of a bar, or at the box-office of a theatre. Adventures are a nuisance and a hindrance, so far as I have experienced them; and as to going out actually hunting for them——

Well, that was very much what the Marquis was doing. I will say this much for him—he wasn't any sort of a coward. I have seen him cry like a girl; I have seen him shiver with excitement, but I never saw him frightened, and I never saw him give anything the best of it. That would have kept me in his company, even if the big diamond had not.

But now we were inevitably linked by that double interest. It shows what a good sort the Marquis was, that we didn't a word's dispute as to who found it first, or whose was the right to claim it—if we ever got it. We just assumed that, being in the thing together, it was "halves." I was to stick to the Marquis, and he to me, till the business was through.

Good Lord! if we had had an idea of how much that meant! . . .

We were beginning to have an inkling, no more, the morning after the poor little pretty girl had been buried. They carried her away, wrapped in mats, to some burial place in the forest as soon as the daylight broke, and we did not get a chance to examine the corpse, as I had wished to do. That hurried look-over in her own house, when we found her dead, had shown me that there was no obvious trace of injury; but I thought her slightly swollen. I suspected poison—the sorcerers of New Guinea are clever poisoners, and very ready to use their powers. But nothing would ever tell us now.

Under ordinary circumstances I would have cleared out of the town straight away, for I knew well that some kind of trouble was sure to follow such an unlucky introduction. But with a diamond the size of a chandelier-luster knocking about in a sorcerer's bag, within a few yards of us, we were not likely to move on in a hurry.

The Marquis and I, on the morning following that eventful night, held a council of war in front of our tent where we could see all that went on in the village

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street, and keep an eye on the whereabouts of Mo. So long as we saw him, we knew that he could not be doing much mischief.

The bat-eared little man was not to be seen that day. (I had ascertained through Koppi Koko that the dead girl was his promised wife, and that she had told him, after watching the Marquis dance, that she never would marry an ugly little thing like him.) He was the sorcerer's youngest and favorite brother, so the useful Koppi Koko had found out—being very anxious to retrieve his character, and save himself the hammering that he feared his desertion might bring down on him. I did not touch him as it happened, not because I thought he didn't deserve it, but because I knew he would be more useful if he were kept in suspense.

I thought his information interesting, but by no means reassuring. It was too much to suppose that the matter would be allowed to end there. The little man must have developed a worse grudge against us than against his late unlucky fiancée, and if her fate was an example of what we had got to expect, things were looking lively.

So I told the Marquis. We were sitting on the ground outside our tent and watching the villagers moving about their daily tasks—water-carrying, net-making, wood-cutting, fetching sago from the forest, going out to dig yams, or to hunt pig. They looked peaceable enough, and it was a peaceful, pretty scene, with the sun just rising over the tall green palms and the smoke curling thin and blue from under the deep thatch roofs.

But the old hand in New Guinea knows well—too well—that the Papuan is most dangerous when, apparently, most friendly. The quiet aspect of the place meant nothing—or worse.

"There is a feeling of sadness upon me this morning; I have the blooming hump," said the Marquis, his fat chin resting upon his pink fat hand. "If you offered me the —the big diamond itself—in payment, I could not dance a step."

"That's right. I reckon you'd better keep on feeling that way as long as you can," I said. "We've trouble enough on our hands without making any more, and your accomplishments do seem to bring the thunder about one's ears, somehow. Mark, let's talk it all out."

"Perfectly," said the Marquis, turning his full-moon face round upon me.

"Look here. We've got to get that diamond. And we've got to avoid being poisoned, as the girl was. And we've got to get our carriers out safe with ourselves, and be on our way to the coast inside of a day or so at the most: it isn't healthy to stop here too long."

"Perfectly. That's right."

"Well, then, I reckon the sorcerer's not going to go on keeping the diamond where he did, because a blind baby could have seen that we wanted it. We must get some idea of likely hiding-places——"

"Hold a minute. Could we not buy it, quite simply?"

"No, Mark; I've tried."

"Already?"

"This morning, while you were choosing between your heliotrope shirt with the green tie, and your pink one with the blue, I went and had a talk with the brute—I'd rather have pounded him to a jelly, but you can't always do the thing you ought to do, up-country in Papua. Told him we had a fancy for his magic crystal; said you were a bit of a sorcerer yourself, and would give a lot for it; offered all it was safe to offer. No go; he didn't rise to it worth twopence. You see, if I had shown him all we had, he would simply have looted our stores and had us knocked on the head—or tried to—and anything I offered didn't tempt him, in comparison with the stone. We have pretty short tucker, you know, Mark—I'm not blaming you, for I know you couldn't afford a big outfit, but there it is: we can't bid high even if it was safe to show everything."

"But, see then!" exclaimed the Marquis. "Could we not promise him?"

"Oh, you could promise him anything, but he wouldn't believe you. They never keep promises themselves, and can't understand any one else doing it. And I put it to you: Would even a white man part with something he valued quite a lot, to a couple of strangers, just on a promise?"

"No," said the Marquis thoughtfully. "Assuredly he would say that a bird in the bush blows nobody good, and laugh in your nose at you."

"Well, what I propose to do is just to take the diamond any way we can get it—steal it, if you like to say so—and when we get back to Port Moresby, send him a big equivalent for it—a case of valuable goods of some kind or other. That would be treating him as fairly as we can. Anyhow,

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I HAVE NEVER BEEN CALLED A NERVOUS MAN; BUT I WAS DOWN THE LADDER AND OUT IN THE STREET ALMOST BEFORE THE MARQUIS.

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there is one thing we aren't going to do, Marky, and that is, leave a chunk of a rough diamond you could break a man's head with knocking loose about Kata-Kata in a sorcerer's bag."

"I am all of accord with you—no blooming fear!" said the Marquis. "But, Flint, there is one thing that I must not forget, even on account of the diamond—my seek for the occult. Can we not get this Mo to show us more things of his magic?"

"If Mo doesn't intend to show you more of his 'magic' without being asked or wanted, you may call me a yellow Chow," I said. "Don't you worry about that; you'll get all you want, I reckon."

We had left the tent now, as it was growing very hot in the village, and we were walking along the bank of the river that ran close beside the street. It was a pretty river, shallow and foamy, and full of big rocks covered with moss and fern. Here and there you could see a pink or purple orchid, and the cocoanuts cast wonderful shadows on the pools.

Just where the shadow was deepest and coolest something stirred in the brown of the water—something that was brown itself, and that glittered with wet. It was Mo, bathing.

I pulled the Marquis back into the shade. "This is luck!" I whispered. "The village is quiet; we can very likely get into Mo's own house, and have a look round. Come on as quick as you can."

. . . How still the wide brown street was, under the terrible mid-day sun! Noon is the lonely hour in Papua, when the heat is at its worst; no man stirs about who is not compelled to do so. The women were in the yam fields, taking their mid-day rest from toil beneath the shelter of the bush. The men were loafing about somewhere in the depths of the forest, pretending to hunt. In the town itself there were only a few old people and children, all asleep. The main street was a river of white fire; the shadows beneath the long-legged houses were like pools of tar. Not a dog stirred out from shelter. Not a footstep rustled or a palm-sheath floor gave forth a creak. It was undoubtedly the moment.

We knew where Mo's house was—a fine building with a high-gabled roof, and an extraordinary amount of ornament in the way of carved birds and crocodiles, and fringes of waving fiber. We scuttled up the ladder silently and swiftly, like two thieves, and dodged in under the low door. Inside, the house was high and cool and empty. A pleasant amber light filtered down from somewhere in the lofty roof; but there were no windows, and the door was buried in the overhanging thatch. Straining our eyes, we looked about us. . . . Mats, wooden sleeping-pillows shaped like alligators; lime gourds carved and poker-worked; tall shields with devilish faces carved upon them; a string of human skulls, extending from the gable to the floor; a dagger carved from a thigh-bone; dancing-masks made in the semblance of sharks and birds and kangaroos; arrows; pineapple-shaped stone clubs; long, barbed, ebony spears. . . .

In one corner hung the sorcerer's great feather bonnet, taken off for bathing; his ugly human-hand locket was tidily laid away on a rafter. The thick bamboo that we had seen him carrying like a wand lay on the floor—tightly corked up. But what interested us more than anything was the big charm-bag, hung on the wall, and bursting full.

We had it down in a moment, and tumbled the things out on the floor, tossing them recklessly here and there, in the search for our wonderful stone. I took the opportunity of looking at all the quartz crystals it contained—there were a good many—and opening all the little banana-leaf parcels, hoping to find another diamond in the absence of our first discovery, which (I saw almost at once) was not there. But there was nothing.

This did not surprise me much, for Koppi Koko had told me (under pressure of certain threats) that the crystal, which was well known to all the natives, had been the property of innumerable sorcerers from time to time, and had, in all probability, passed about over half Papua. Nothing could be more impossible, in that country of Babel-dialects, than to find out where the stone had originally come from. However, if we could only get hold of it, I was not bothering much about anything else.

"It seems to me," said the Marquis, drawing himself erect and kicking aside the bag with his foot, "that our friend, Monsieur Mo, is not such a fool as he glitters."

"That's right," I answered, looking round again. Rolled-up mats?—gourds?—clay water-pots? Impossible to say. At all events, we might——

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THE MARQUIS WAS SITTING UP ON HIS BED, LOOKING WHITE AND DRAWN.

"My God, Flint!" said the Marquis, in a low, horrified voice. "My God of Gods, look at that!"

The flimsy flooring shook as he bounded back toward the door. I jumped back with him, just in case—and then looked.

The bamboo was rolling about on the floor, and trying to stand on its end!

We stood with our backs against the thatch by the door, breathing very hard, and staring still harder. The thing kept on jumping and rolling. It was rolling toward us.

I have never been called a nervous man; but I was down the ladder and out in the street almost before the Marquis. It has

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always seemed to me a special Providence that we did not meet, and stick, in the door.

We were scarcely out, and beginning to feel a little foolish—I, for one, had made up my mind already to go back and investigate the thing, sorcery, trick, or whatever it was—when we saw the tall, wet figure of Mo coming up through the trees from the river. It did not seem a happy time to continue our investigations, so we made for the tent, trying to look as if we had only been out for a stroll, and (I dare say) succeeding just about as well as a couple of small boys caught coming away from the fruit garden.

"No go," I said, flinging myself down on the pile of sacks inside our tent. "Mark, we'll have a smoke and a game of cards, and then we'll go to sleep."

"What for, to sleep?" asked the Marquis.

"Because I don't propose to sleep much to-night—nor will you. It seems to me that things are given to happening here at night, and I intend to keep a look-out instead."

"We will sleep, then," agreed my companion. And we did, after our smoke and our game—all through the burning afternoon, until the sun began to drop behind the cocoanuts, and the leather-necks commenced their evening squawking and squabbling, and the smoke of supper fires stole out, smelling pleasant and peaceful and homey and everything that it particularly was not—here in the heart of cannibal Papua, in the sorcerer's town.

When we woke up we were thoroughly rested, for we had slept long and deep, after our broken rest the night before. I called up Koppi Koko, and bade him get the supper ready. The Marquis yawned, stretched, and sat up on his mat.

"Hallo!" I said. "There's another of your singlets going; you won't have enough clothes to carry you back to Port Moresby, at this rate." For the Marquis, being big and fat, stretched his clothes terribly, and, in consequence, they were wearing very fast.

"I do feel like a cool window in my back; have a look, kindly," he said, trying to see over his own shoulder.

I looked at his back. "Mark," I said, "take off your singlet and look at it. I don't like this."

I had to peel him out of it, for it had shrunk and was tight. When he was clear, and had the garment on his knee, he gave it one glance, and then looked at me.

"My friend, as I said yesterday, we are in deep waters," he remarked. "This, while I lay asleep, has been cut. This cut, it has taken out a piece, and the piece is the same size as——"

"As the piece out of the girl's belt," I finished.

We looked at each other; the leather-necks squawked outside; the dogs of the village began that peculiarly mournful, wolf-like howling that native dogs always do set up about sunset.

"And the girl, the little beautiful, that night she died," observed the Marquis. He whistled softly to himself: an air I did not know—a crying, sobbing sort of tune it was, and not calculated to raise any one's spirits if they had needed it—which I should have thought the Marquis's might.

"See, I will dance her requiem," he said. "Perhaps my own, good Flint. One never knows."

Singing the air gently to himself—I can not describe how mournful and calling-you-to-come-back it sounded, or how the horrid wailing of the native dogs chimed in and became a part—he danced, in the twelve-by-fourteen space of the tent. . . . I have seen something like it in the Islands, when the warriors were dancing for the funeral of a great dead chief—something, but not so good. It was grief, and death, and despair put into motion, and translated, by the Marquis's huge limbs, into a language that even the Papuans themselves would have understood. All, too, as lightly as—as—well, as the feathers waving in the wind upon a hearse.

When he had done he sat down, and smiles broke out all over his pink, fat face.

"Good, eh?" he said. "That was a funeral dance of prehistoric Crete, that I found among the buried carvings of the palace of Minos, which they have lately——"

"Come back," I said. "This isn't ancient Crete, it's modern New Guinea, and we're in a hole. Mark, I propose, for to-night, that we let on to go to sleep, but don't—and then we'll see what happens. As for supper, I'm going out to cook that myself. I'm not taking any chances just now."

"As you wish," said the Marquis. "But you can not deny that it is all most interesting."

"Oh, very—damned—interesting," I said.

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"I hope it doesn't get any more so. I'd like a little boredom for a change, if you ask me." And I went to cook the supper—not that I thought it really necessary, but just—in case. One does a lot of things for that reason, in the queer places of Papua.

We had a little coffee in our stores, and I brewed a billy-can full, for I did not want any mistakes made about going to sleep. At the usual hour we put out our light and lay down on the rough sack-beds I had fixed up. The Marquis and I were near enough together to touch each other if we wished. We turned in all standing, even to our boots. The carriers were camped in a little hut close by; our stores were mostly piled up in the tent, and we had our revolvers strapped round our waists.

It was arranged that we were to take watch and watch about, for two hours each, and that the man on watch should sit on his bed, not lie. I could guess the time easily enough, and the Marquis thought he could also. In any case, there should be no striking of matches.

The night wore on but slowly. At first there were constant stirrings in the village—talking, squabbling, moving here and there; then the dogs began to fight; then some of the roosters waked up and crowed, and roused out the rest a good many hours too soon. But by degrees the town settled to rest. I had taken the first watch; had lain down—not to sleep—through the Marquis's; and now my second watch was well on its way.

After a time it grew so still that the silence seemed to tingle, in the way it does when you are awake at night and listening. There was not a breath of wind, no moon, and few stars; the weather had been heavy and thunderous all day, and the sky was clouded. In the triangle made by the opening of the tent I could see—when I had been straining my eyes into the dark for quite a long time—the dim grayness of the village street, and the black bank of palms beyond.

I say there was not a sound, nor anything to see. Seated there on my rough bed, every sense alert, I might have been alone at the end of the world, with the last man dead beside me.

But it came to me, not suddenly, quietly and surely, that we were not alone. I do not know whence the first warning conveyed itself; it came, however, and I found myself listening and looking expectantly, with a certainty in my mind that something was going to happen.

Sight and hearing are not the only senses that a bushman can use to good effect. I smelt, cautiously and without noise.

There was the marshy odor of the river behind the palms. There was the indescribable smell of a native village — dry, sun-baked earth, insanitary whiffs of decaying stuff, the hay-like odor of old thatch. And something more—the smell of cocoanut-oil, warm and fresh, and very near.

I remembered that the Papuan always oils himself after bathing. I recollected having seen Mo in the river.

Very cautiously I stretched out and touched the Marquis's hand. He was awake—he was not the kind of man to sleep when he ought to have been waking, for all his flummery—and his hand met mine with a squeeze. We listened hard. There was not the ghost of a sound, but the smell grew stronger, passed, and died away. And, just after, the faintest possible shadow crossed the gray of the road.

We listened again, and I for one did not like it, for I knew that whatever Mo had meant to do was done. Then, suddenly, the Marquis's hand caught hold of mine in a grip that was painful.

"Flint, a light!" was all he said. I had my matches in my hand, and I struck one almost before he had done speaking. The Marquis was sitting up on his bed, looking white and drawn.

"It is the 'touch of death,'" he said. "I have felt it—cold as—as nothing but death is cold." He sat like a statue; his hand had let mine go and was gripping tight to the edge of the bed. I was up in a moment, and looking all round the tent. There was not a thing to be seen. Having searched, I put out the light again and waited. It is not a good thing to make yourself a target for possible arrows shot in the dark. I could hear the Marquis breathing heavily.

Then, in a moment, he gave a terrible cry, leaped right on to my bed, and brought

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it and me and himself down to the earth together in one tremendous crash.

There was no use trying to "lie low" after that. I struggled out somehow, lit the hurricane lamp, and asked the Marquis, who was sitting half-dazed in the midst of the ruins, what he supposed had happened.

He was still deadly pale.

"I don't know, my Flint," he answered, looking at me with the fixed expression of the man who has had a shock. "I know only that the hand of death itself was laid upon me, there in the dark—first it has touched my arm, and then my heart where my clothes were open for the heat."

"How do you know it was the hand of death?" I asked, getting a bottle of whisky out of one of our swags. "How do you know you weren't asleep after all, and having a bad dream?"

WE STOOD IN THE DARK UNDER THE HOUSE, LOOKING BREATHLESSLY THROUGH THE CRACKS IN THE FLOOR, AND WATCHING ME.

"I was not asleep; you will remember I clasped your hand. And that thing was death, I know, because in these plains where it is all the time hot there is nothing cold at all, and that which has touched me was the cold of death."

"Rats! You aren't dead. Have some whisky," I said, pouring it out.

"Yes, I am escaped; that's what I don't comprehend," said the Marquis thoughtfully. "That is good whisky; that warms the muscles of the heart. Flint—" with a sudden revival—"you can not but must allow, this is the very devil interesting!"

We were rather sleepy in the morning, I remember—the effect of the coffee having worn off. I had an idea or two as to what

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course we had best follow for the capturing of the stone; but nothing could be done before midday. So I and the Marquis kept watch for each other to sleep, and we got in a good three hours apiece before noon.

When the white blaze of twelve o'clock was searing the palms once more, and the village folk were away or asleep, and Mo had gone down to the river again to bathe. I beckoned the Marquis out. We wore the rubber-soled shoes that one uses for easy bush-walking, and made not a sound as we passed along the street. The shadows of the palms were ink upon white paper; the dogs slept beneath the houses; the tame cockatoos and parrots drowsed upon the eaves. The heat was awful: it seemed as though the village in its stillness lay dead beneath a torrent of white fire from the implacable sky.

AND MO KNEW IT, LITTLE AS WE THOUGHT IT.

We gained the sorcerer's house without being seen and slipped into the cool interior, gasping like creatures that find water after drought.

"What a day!" choked the Marquis, in a whisper—we feared, somehow, to talk aloud. "You may have thankfulness that you are as lean as a herring, Flint. If you had my weight——"

He sat down on the floor to cool off—and it promptly gave way beneath him. I hauled him out with some trouble, and set him in a safe place.

"I believe that's a trap-door," I said, looking at it. "Seems to be meant for a hurried get-away in case of trouble. Not a bad idea. I wonder how he came to leave it open."

We looked about us. The bamboo that had given us such an unpleasant start on the day before was nowhere to be seen. Otherwise the house was the same. Still—whether it was the effect of the alarm in the night, or simply the discouragement that always treads close on the heels of excited hope—I did not feel that we were nearer our goal. Rather, I felt farther away.

"We must look," said the Marquis, who evidently did not share my discouragement. "You will look one side of the house, I will look the other, and before Mo will come back——"

He did not finish the sentence, for up the long ladder leading to the door (Mo's house was the highest in the village) came, at that moment, a slowly creaking step.

With one consent we dived through the trap-door and pulled it flat after us. Then we halted under the house, listening and looking eagerly.

"If he doesn't see us—" I whispered.

"I think he can not," answered the Marquis, cautiously. "But we can see him through these cracks— What chance! What chance!"

. . . It is long ago now, but to this day I am vexed when I think how easily the greasy old villain took us in—how readily we dropped into his snare. That Mo had been perfectly aware of our visit the day before, that he guessed we would come

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again, had returned early in order to hurry us out, had left the trap-door open in order that we might go through it and watch him underneath the house—had indeed planned the whole thing from start to finish—never occurred to either of us at the time, though, indeed, we might have guessed that the chief sorcerer of the chief town of sorcery-riddled Kata-Kata was not likely to be quite so simple as he seemed.

At any rate, there we stood in the dark under the house, looking breathlessly through the cracks in the floor, and watching Mo. And Mo knew it, little as we thought it.

First of all, he took the long bamboo off his breast—it had accompanied him to the river to-day, seemingly—uncorked the top, and looked cautiously in. We could not see what was inside. He put his palm over the opening, and with the other hand drew toward him one of the large clay water-pots standing on the floor. These water-pots narrowed to a mouth about four inches across; some of them had baked-clay lids on the top. He chose one that had a lid, uncovered it, and dropped something in.

Where had he produced it from? The man was like a conjurer. I had not seen anything in his hand a moment before—but it was undoubtedly the great diamond that he dropped into the jar. I even heard it tinkle against the hard clay bottom as it fell. The Marquis, in his excitement, pinched my arm so hard that it was black and blue afterward. I knew he was simply boiling with corked-up speech, and I wondered how long he could hold on.

Now the sorcerer, after a hurried look round the empty house (he really was a splendid actor), removed his palm from the top of the bamboo, and inverted it over the jar. We could see by his motions that he was pouring something from the one to the other; it seemed to come slowly, and take some time. When he had done, he put the clay cover on the jar, shook the empty bamboo, and threw it down.

After this he produced a small trade looking-glass, oiled his hair, put feathers in it, painted his face, took his bag of charms off the wall, slung a tall bow on his shoulder, and whistled to his dog. It was plain that he was going hunting—probably courting also, the two occupations often mixing and overlapping a good deal in the Papuan forests.

We waited. We waited till Mo and his dog and his bow and his bag had disappeared down the village street, pale and unsubstantial in the glaring overhead sun. We waited another ten minutes after. Silence: the village slept beneath the fiery enchantment of noon; the birds were voiceless in the forest; the giant leaves hung still.

"Now!" I said, and we crept back through the trap-door.

For a moment we stood silent in the lonely house, the scene of Satan alone knew what deviltries. The hideous dancing-masks grinned at us from the walls; the skulls showed their teeth. The sorcerer's bamboo lay on the floor, empty, open, defying us to solve its mystery. And at our very feet stood the water-jar, its wide-splayed mouth covered only by the lid of baked clay.

Was the prize really in our grasp at last? I hesitated, stretched out a hand, and took it back—stopped, listened. . . .

There certainly was a sound somewhere. It was a familiar sound, and yet I could not say exactly what it was. It was near and it was not near. It was— What in the name of the devil was it?

"See, Flint, I tire of this!" shouted the Marquis suddenly and imprudently. (I judge that he had heard it too, and it and other things had "got on his nerves," as women say.) "Faint heart gathers no moss—here goes for France, my brave!" He made a dart at the jar and snatched off the lid.

Do you know what is the swiftest thing in the animal kingdom? Did you ever see a brown flash of lightning get up from the ground and strike?

I know, and I had seen just such a thing before. So I didn't have to stop and think. . . . The Marquis got my punch fair in the chest; it doubled him up and sent him half across the house. My right hand being thus occupied, I hadn't time to attend to my left and it got in the way. It was on the first joint of the third finger that the snake got me. He held on like a bulldog.

Now, I must have knocked the wind pretty well out of the Marquis, in throwing him out of the way as I did; but you never saw a man recover quicker. He was up on his feet before one would have time to tell of it. He had got a great steel clearing-knife down from the wall (evidently Mo did a bit of coastal trading) in two seconds or thereabouts, and had slashed the snake clean

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through before I got it shaken off. I pulled its head away then and threw it on the floor. I had had a look at it and saw that there was only one thing to do.

"Give me the knife," I said. The Marquis gave it and, as I am alive, he was crying as he did.

There was nothing to make a fuss about. I had the top joint of the finger off in two clean chops. And there is no finger a man can spare better than the left-hand third.

I tied it up and put a sort of tourniquet on. Then I remembered the diamond—it was not so strange that I'd forgotten it for a minute or two, all things considered—and put my right hand into the jar that had lately held such an unpleasant occupant. I pulled out—not the diamond, but a bit of common stone tied up in a leaf.

The sorcerer had us again. No doubt he had palmed the jewel, somehow or other, when setting his trap.

I was feeling a bit sick, what with loss of blood and the small amount of poison that had got into circulation before I took the finger off. I was sure now that we had not a chance of getting the stone—as things were. Mo was thoroughly awake, and there was nothing for it but to retreat—for the present.

"Wait till I come back with an R. M. and a score of armed native constabulary, you heathen beast," I said to myself. "Just wait. You've earned what you'll get—richly earned it."

"We've got to go, Mark," I said aloud. "Get the carriers together for me as quick

IT WAS ON THE FIRST JOINT OF THE THIRD FINGER THAT THE SNAKE GOT ME.

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as you can; it's the best time, with all the people away. If we stay on, there'll be a row to-night as sure as Fate, and the Government don't like unofficial people to do its killing for it. We'll come back, and give them what-for with the chill off. Oh, Lord, don't do that!"

For the Marquis was hanging round my neck—a pretty solid weight—and had already kissed me loudly on both cheeks.

"My brave retainer!" he said, with tears in his voice (I reckoned he meant preserver, but it was all one), "what can I ever do to recompense you of my life that you have saved?"

"I told you what to do just now," I said. "Get the carriers under way, and sharp. I want to drink some ammonia."

I did, and it did me good; I was able to walk almost as well as usual in half an hour. I slung my arm up in a long sheaf of grass, and we set off from the village as hard as we could, keeping a look-out for ambushes all the way. But the noonday hush lay on all the forest and the track, and there was not a sign of life.

When we were an hour or two away, I halted for a rest; the bite was getting at me a little, and I felt slightly giddy, though I knew by now that there was no danger.

"Tell me, what was all this thing that has happened?" demanded the Marquis, dropping on a log at my side and fanning himself with his hat. "I am bursting of curiosity, but I would not disturb you."

"Well," I said, "if I had known Kata-Kata as I know other districts in New Guinea, none of them would have happened at all. The whole thing might have been foreseen. It's true I had heard silly yarns about this part of the country, but I didn't believe them, they seemed so exaggerated—and they quite went out of my head, anyhow, for I was hardly more than a kid when I did hear them. But I've remembered them to-day."

"What were they, then?"

"People—natives, I mean—said that the Kata-Kata sorcerers knew how to tame snakes and make them like dogs, and that the brutes would bite any one their masters told them to. The sorcerers would get a bit of a man's clothing, taken next his skin where it had the scent of his body, and worry and tease the snake with it so that it would know the smell, and hate it. And then they said the sorcerer would let loose his snake at night in the house of the man he wanted to kill, and the brute would bite him, and the sorcerer would get it and take it home again before he was seen."

"*Taubada*, true you talk," broke in Koppi Koko, who was squatting on the ground close to us, chewing betel-nut most contentedly. "That puri-puri man, he take him snake all the time 'long one bamboo, carry him along him chest."

"That accounts for the milk of the cocoanut," I said. "What a pair of babies to be scared by a stick with a snake in it, hopping about! Of course, the thing heard people and was trying to get loose."

"Yes, and the snake—the cold snake—that was the touch of death last night—not?"

"Very nearly," I said. "The general smash you made saved your life, Marky."

"And the little beautiful, and the piece cut out of her belt—yes, now one sees all," said the Marquis, musingly. "Flint, this is a devil of a country of yours; but, on my soul, it is interesting. What adventures!"

"I take no stock in adventures," I said. "I'd rather keep out of them. But I reckon, somehow, there's more ahead before we get that stone."

*The third story of the quest of the "**Sorcerer's Stone**" will appear in the October number.*

OH!

Magistrate: —"What was the prisoner doing?"

Constable: "'E were 'avin' a very 'eated argument with a cabdriver, yer worship."

Magistrate: "But that doesn't prove he was drunk."

Constable: "Ah! But there wer'n't no cabdriver ther', yer worship."

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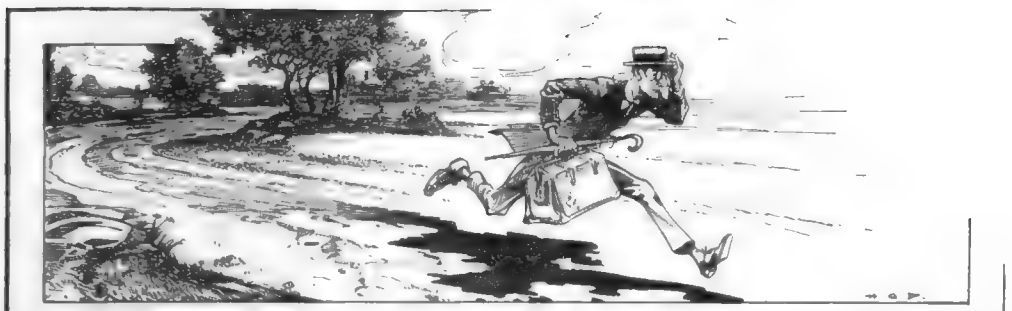

"A Short Walk to the Station is a Darn Long Run"

Buy a Farm

by

Eugene Wood

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HARRY GRANT DART

EVERY one should buy a farm.

A farm is not in these days by necessary implication fifteen miles from anywhere, over a road sometimes a mere meringue of mud, sometimes up to the horses' ears in dust. To own a farm successfully it is not necessary to have even theoretical knowledge of humus and legumes, cover-crops, roughage, which is Haw and which is Gee, or that lime corrects acidity in the soil the same as cooking-soda relieves heartburn. It is a good thing to have a line of talk like that, if only for the purpose spoken of in "The Mikado"—"to give artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative." But it isn't really essential.

The word "farm," once somewhat earth-stained, is now become one of the neatest and most swept-up expressions that a body can use. Turn not to the dictionary for its definition, that dusty depot of dead speech, but to the Sunday newspaper, the fount of living waters of locution.

Say you have a place of about fifteen hundred acres, mostly laid out like a park; only instead of signs in English reading "This Way to the Carousel," you have signs in French to the effect that servants found walking in these paths will save themselves further annoyance by going directly to the office to get their time; with a crushed-stone, semicircular driveway sweeping grandly up to what might be the Blind Asylum, but what is a private residence, built on a scale of thirty "master's" rooms, each with a connecting bath; outfitted with private ice-plant, private electric-light plant, private fuel-gas plant, hot and cold water in every room except the servants'; a garage sheltering a herd of automobiles, eating their heads off, and fearfully skittish when first taken out; conservatory yielding ½ bu. orchids per day, etc., etc., etc.

That's a farm.

So is less than a quarter of an acre. Oh, well, if you don't believe me, cast your eye over this advertisement: "SMALL FARM, suitable for chickens, 100 x 100 feet; one hour out; within short walk of station," etc., etc., etc.

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"Gentleman's farm," "commuter's farm," they run all sizes and all prices, so that the fear of either physical or financial discomfort should deter no one from buying a farm. I saw one advertised the other day for $2.75. What do you think of that? Perhaps it was $275; but since it was for sale on the easy-payment plan, what matters a decimal point here or there? Right now $275, and next year $275 are essentially two different things—with everything in favor of next year.

The tide is certainly setting "Back to the Land." In my judgment the reason why it doesn't set stronger is that so many people who read the Sunday newspapers throw away the real-estate section as so much surplusage, same as they do the book-review section.

The editors are to blame for that. If they would only play it up more! They don't begin to make the fuss over it that they do over the department where they answer questions like: "I am a young lady seventeen years old, and considered good-looking. I met a real handsome gentleman at a party night before last and he danced with me twice. Do you think he loves me?"

Yet I submit that looking at places in the country and going with the girls are, in their most intimate nature, the same sort of a sporting proposition. In either case you're liable to get a "sticker" sawed off on you; that's true enough. But then, again, you're liable to find the bargain of a lifetime. You never can tell till you try.

If it is Love that makes the world go round, it is Land that makes it go more or less rectangularly, e. g., "from a point at the N.E. corner of the S.E. ¼ of Section 16, known as Snyder's Subdivision, thence westerly to a point," etc., etc.

But though the editors have plainly fallen down on their jobs, there are many who have learned the lesson that there are few more fascinating ways of spending an afternoon than to take the train to some place "one hour out," and get an agent to ride you around in his automobile for a few hours to visit the possibilities "within a short walk of the station."

While I think of it, I'll just give notice here and now that I have applied for copyright on an original illuminated motto to be hung up over the clock in all commuters' breakfast-rooms: "A Short Walk to the Station Is a Darn Long Run." It ought to go like hot cakes, don't you think? (And with 'em.)

"We've all our angel side," the poet sings. Even in the most hopeless proposition, not excepting the one advertised as "some fruit on lot," meaning one gooseberry bush, and one dead apple-tree whose branches look like fireworks done in India ink, there is much to interest. Undiscerning eyes may see only an old shack painted in orange with blue outside trim, murescoed within in royal purple, washing-blue, lemon yellow, strawberry pink, and Fenian green; with two steps up from the kitchen to the dining-room; only one clothes-closet in the house; no way of getting to any bedroom except through two others; no water in the house but the two inches in the cellar, and the well out in the yard right next to what it ought to be a mile away from.

But the true "looker" beholds a transformed residence too dear for words, in what would give anybody else conniption fits, one after another.

Just move the staircase over to the other side, and fix it so's the tread will be a little wider and the riser not so high, and turn it at the bottom landing, and put in these slim spindles for the banister—you'll have to cut an archway so that you won't come chug up against the door; and throw these two rooms into one, and make two rooms out of that big one; and jack the kitchen up to the dining-room level and build new foundations under it; and would you or wouldn't you have a kind of back stoop fixed on, with settles?

What a perfectly gorgeous dining-room this would be if you'd make the whole south wall a bay-window and fill it full of plants and things! And run a veranda clear around the house—not one of these narrow, skimpy things, but nice and wide; make it two stories and use the up-stairs one for a sleeping-porch, and cut the hall-window into a door so's you could undress in the house and slip out, blow the snow off the under sheet, and snuggle in between the hot-water bottles.

Oh! Why! There isn't a fireplace in the house, not even a boarded-up one! Well, we'd attend to that. We'd make one out of field-stone. Cost you nothing, almost; absolutely nothing for material, only to pick it up and sort it out and have it built.

Hardwood floors? Oh, certainly. See how the old floors are all worn into spoon-

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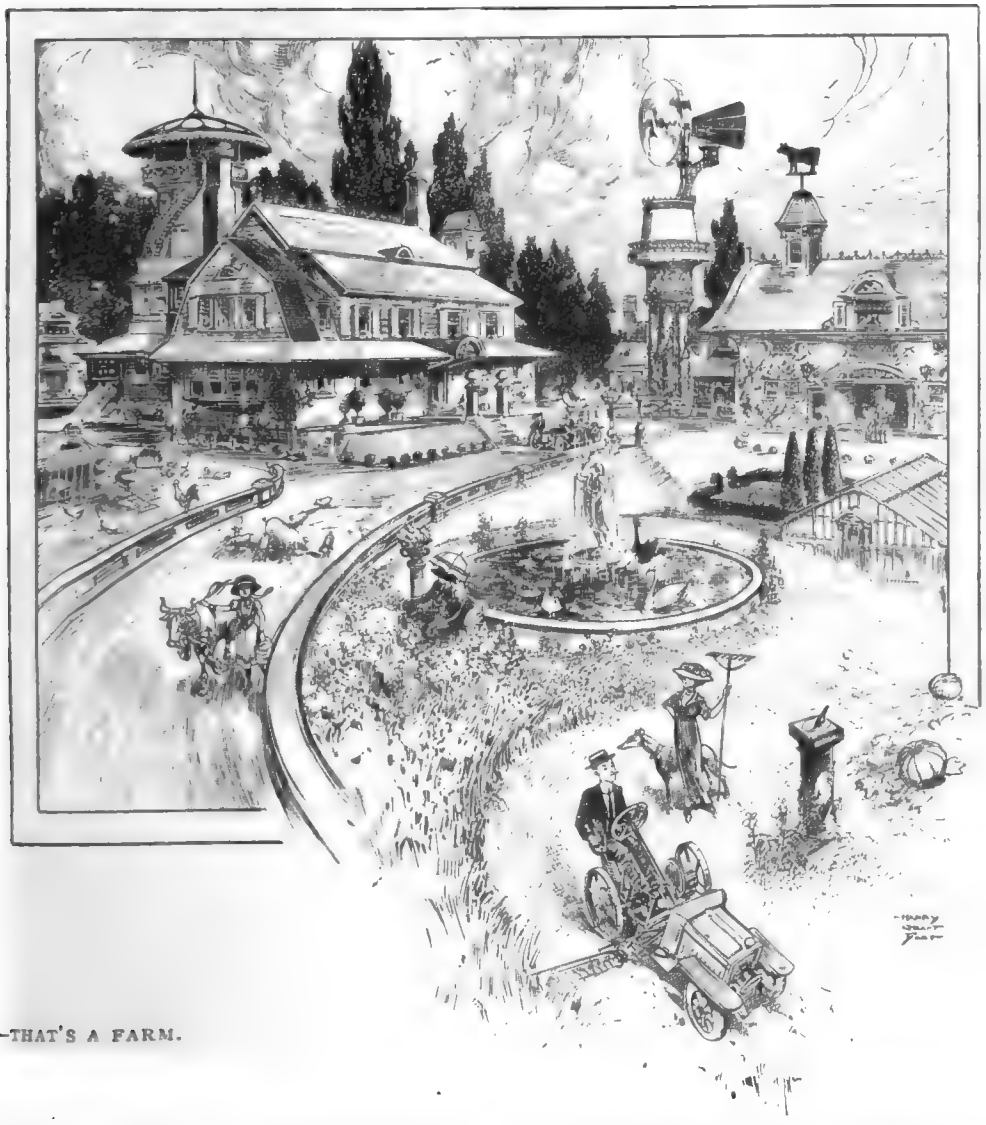

—THAT'S A FARM.

hollows. I suppose the best thing would be to wash all that muresco off, and decorate it properly and artistically, and paint the trim an egg-shell white. You'd have to pull out all the nails, though, and putty up the holes. Did ever you see a place so full of nails? The woodwork is simply *saturated* with nails! Quarts and quarts of them. It seems as if the occupants, whenever time hung heavy on their hands, had said: "I tell you what le's do. Le's drive some nails."

The roof needs mending badly, and while we are about it we might as well have it to suit us. I've got some ideas about roofs I'd like to see worked out. And either rip the weather-boarding off entirely or shingle over it. And these doors ought to be something more solid; they ought to have glass knobs. Or—I tell you: I saw some brass thumb-latches the other day, so quaint and old-fashioned; I think I'd like them all over the house.

Oh, cement floor in the cellar, certainly, and install hot-water heating. The initial cost is a little more, but it's so much cheaper to operate. And then the heat's so nice. There's none of this snapping and cracking that there is with steam; it's so gentle and gradual, so that along about eleven o'clock

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of a severely cold morning you pretty nearly get the chill off. Driven well and a big tank on stilts and a pumping engine, because it really is violent exercise to get the water up into the attic reservoir with a hand-pump.

But where'll we put the bathroom? Doesn't seem to be any place *for* one. Oh, well, we could build on an addition.

And if I were you, I'd have the yard regraded. Clear out all that ratty shrubbery, and cart off the "rockery," though some of it would do for the chimney, and dig up the stumps they have with flower-baskets on them. Just a simple sward looks best.

Oh, you could do a lot with a place like that. If you were an architect, and a working carpenter, practical stone-and-brick-mason, plumber, steam-fitter, locksmith, machinist, interior decorator, and landscape-gardener, you could do it in your spare time and it would be only fun. But, of course, you *could* hire some of it done. Wonderful possibilities! Really wonderful! And a good business proposition. Say it sets you back $4,000 for the place just as it stands; the improvements would cost—say $6,000, or maybe $7,000. But when you got all through, why, it would be worth anyhow $9,000.

More, if you can get more for it.

"I declare I just hate to go away and leave it," you say when you have got it all planned out. The real-estate agent looks smilingly expectant; he all but wags his tail. But the part of wisdom would be to shop around a little more. "Well," you sigh at last and turn away, "we'll *consider* it. What else have you?"

The real-estate man slinks off dejectedly to crank up his machine. Don't you care how sad he looks. If you go to getting sentimental and thinking of his wife and family at home, hoping and praying that papa may bring home a commission, you'll just take all the pleasure out of the day's outing.

And, anyhow, he had no more expectation of selling the thing than you had of buying it.

"Looking" is certainly great sport. For sheer excitement I don't know of anything that can compare with it—unless it is going with the girls when you're a young fellow, knowing as well as if you actually heard it that their mothers are teasing them to find out if they don't kind o' like you. You buy them candy, and take them to the theater, and the Gamma Lambda Epsilon dance; but as far as this business of "Faithful and true, we lead ye forth," and "I, John, take thee, Mary," is concerned—why, not at all. No. No. No.

If you are only careful and watch your step you can carry that same pitcher to the well forever and not break it.

Nevertheless, a day will come, James Montgomery, when the carefullest will do the world-old act of fitting the broken shards together and wondering how it happened.

This is as it should be. What would the world be if pitchers never went to the well just once too often? There are several reasons why young men should marry; I never counted them all up, but I think I'm safe in saying "several." And he that never bought a farm is merely an uneducated boob. Knowledge is the true patent to nobility, and this is why there is such solid satisfaction in saying: "We're going out to the farm to spend the Christmas holidays," although you know and everybody else knows that you won't get the place really warmed up short of a week, and that you'll find the pump frozen, not a drop of kerosene in the house, and only one little bit of a piece of candle about so long.

The education derived from owning a farm may be said to be classical or scientific, according as the farm is one where you hope to be able to raise crops or one where you hope to be able to raise the cash to pay for it without losing your life-insurance.

In both courses the subject-matter is essentially the same. It corrects the vulgar error that of the three factors in production, (1) Land, (2) Labor, (3) Capital, factors 1 and 3 are about all you need. Necessary as is Land, also money in the bank (sometimes called Variable Capital for reasons unnecessary to go into here), Labor is pretty doggone necessary, too, and don't you forget it.

I repeat, Don't you forget it, though that is tautological. When you own a farm, you don't forget. You can't. You aren't let.

In algebra the unknown quantity is represented by x; in the classical course of farm-owning the unknown *quality* is represented by "couple," which also stands for Labor, if it isn't too hard.

Of the couple, the man *should* be a prac-

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tical farmer, orchardist, gardener, veterinary, hammer-and-saw carpenter, screw-driver-and-monkey-wrench machinist, and general handy man; the woman *should* be a first-rate cook, neat housekeeper, skilled laundress, able to wait on table, look after the milk of one cow, tend to the chickens, etc.

Both should be tidy, respectful, intelligent, economical, industrious, sober, and not want much wages.

I may say, in passing, that the female element of the couple is far more likely to know her business than the male. (Suffragette papers please copy.)

To give a complete syllabus of the entire classical course would trespass on the space allotted to me, but I may briefly touch upon a few points, such as: How to tell her gently yet firmly not to leave a hot flat-iron on your best shirt while she gasses with the pedler; how to keep calm and collected when he puts the south field into corn the eighth time hand-running when you expressly told him to put it in alfalfa; where to hide the whisky-jug; how to search trunks for missing valuables; what to do when you find that he hasn't been paying the bills with the money you gave him for that purpose; how to telephone the Maternity Hospital to send an ambulance right quick; how to get him not to beat her when there are people out from town for a week-end, and so forth and so on, with much more of the same sort.

A LADDER WOULD MAKE A PREACHER SWEAR.

While the classical course is admirable in its way, the scientific, in which the Landlord, the Laborer, and the Capitalist are one person, and the farm is not larger than 100 x 300 feet, in the choice residence section one hour out, and a short walk from the station, is more popular. It is also more effective in dispelling the illusion that that much Land is all that is necessary in order to have a lovely lawn, posy-beds, fruit-trees, garden, chickens, and a cow.

It will be observed that I omit the pig. I do so purposely. Although the popular appeal of the pig is very great—in part because, as it has been put so beautifully, "the pig kin ate what we can't ate, and we kin ate the pig," and partly because of all our food-products he is at once the most nutritious and the most varied in flavor, ranging from ham on the south to head-cheese on the north, through bacon, lard, pickled pigs' feet, pork tenderloin, spareribs, sausage loose and—er—otherwise, liverwurst, blood pudding, pawn-hoss, scrapple, and other chin-greasing confections—in spite of all, the pig will have to be crossed off the list of the attractions on the commuter's farm.

The Board of Health won't stand for it. The Board of Health stands for the back-yard of the Criterion Ice-Cream Parlor and the back room of the Ideal Restaurant, sometimes known as the Café Typhoid, compared with which a pigsty is swept by ocean breezes. But the President of the Board of Health is also owner of both those properties. A word to the wise is sufficient.

I now direct your attention lawn-ward.

Few things are more honorific in their nature than a lawn so elegantly barbered that it almost smells of brilliantine. Even the people who ride by in automobiles of next year's model turn their heads to look admiringly, and the quick lip-reader can see their mouths go, "Oh, how lovely!"

The flush of honest pride may well suffuse the face of him whose own fair hands have dug out humps and padded hollows in the turf; have pulled the ponderous roller in the

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soft springtide until a spirit-level can be set down on any spot and have the bubble stay spang in the middle; have sifted fertilizer till the breezes blowing across remind one of narcissus blossoms right close to; have pushed the mower at early morn and dewy eve (dewy eve preferred), and clipped with scissors and a blistered thumb the long grass by the fence and round the flower-beds; have yanked out lace-flowers rooted like a rope; have dug up plantains, plain and "niggerhead," and deftly dropped a drop of kerosene on each excided stub; have played the hose in August drought while the expensive water-meter clicked like a clock.

Show me the man whose lawn is in good condition year by year and I will show you one whose wife did well to get him.

For, let me tell you, friends and fellow-travelers to the tomb, there are more sticks and bones, clothes-pins, and crooked wires upon a lawn, Horatio, than are dreamt of in our philosophy. And he that cheerfully endures the slams upon the bread-basket that the lawn-mower hands him when its cutters clog, possesses more than Christian fortitude—it mounts up to fiftytude.

Mowing the lawn on an inside lot of an Own-Your-Own-Home section is one thing; mowing the lawn of a "farm" with one-hundred-foot frontage on East Main Street is "something else again," especially in early summer when the cosmic urge gets underneath the grass and shoves it upward at the rate of one-half inch per hour. And he must hump himself who would not have folks think that he had sunk so low as to want to get a hay-crop.

This brings us to the next item in the list of comforts on the commuter's farm not due exclusively to there being Land enough. In the city's crowded marts it seems to be the general impression that fruits of most delicious flavor, A 1 "fancies," just naturally grow on trees, and all there is to do is go and pick 'em. Well, picking is some job, too, if you want to know.

The folks in town roll up their eyes with envy when you tell them you had five bushels off your strawberry patch. They get them in stingy little boxes whose bottoms are right up against the top, and such sour things it makes you squinch your face all up to eat one dry, and you to have *five bushels* of nice, sweet berries right in the back yard where you can get 'em any time —why, it's riches beyond the dreams of avarice!

There are many things to be said in praise of strawberries, but their being so close to the ground is not one of them. In gathering them it seems there's more of you from the hips down than there is any call for. Whether you elect to squat, each ear against its nearest knee, or stoop until your face swells, the thought is ever present with you that these are not so much the gifts of bounteous Nature as the fruits of honest toil. Oh, you *earn* your five bushels; don't let that escape you.

But when it comes to collecting the raw material for Heaven's best gift to man, the cherry-pie, what for strawberry picking were, as it were, mere excess leggage, is now pitifully insufficient, to be supplemented by a ladder.

Now a good, long, heavy ladder presents engineering problems of no mean difficulty. I presume more people have lost the blessing trying to get a ladder through a gate than in any other way that Satan knows of. A ladder would make a preacher swear; it can act up so. There's such a radius to it when you turn a corner; such a leverage when you try to stand it up and the bottom end slips. And it is simply possessed to flop when you are carrying it on edge upon your shoulder. . . .

I tell you: Never wear a derby or nose-glasses when you're doing business with a ladder, for nothing gives it more delight than to mash the hat hopelessly, and knock your glasses off so you will step on them. I need scarcely say that of the two lenses it is the dollar-and-a-half one that breaks in preference to the seventy-five-cent one. This well-known phenomenon is due to the combined action of the Law of Economic Determinism and the Law of the Cussedness of Inanimate Objects.

Ladders and cherry-trees are not what you might call *simpatica*. In a manner of speaking, the top end of a ladder should rest firmly on a two-em dash. But such is the nature of cherry-trees that the top end of the ladder rests quite un-firmly in the crotch of a rude capital Y. The finest cherries grow at the extreme tip-end of topmost branches. Just as you are cautiously bending the whip-like withe toward you with its luscious fruits, the ladder cants, and you and the cherry-bucket hit the ground with almost simultaneous thumps.

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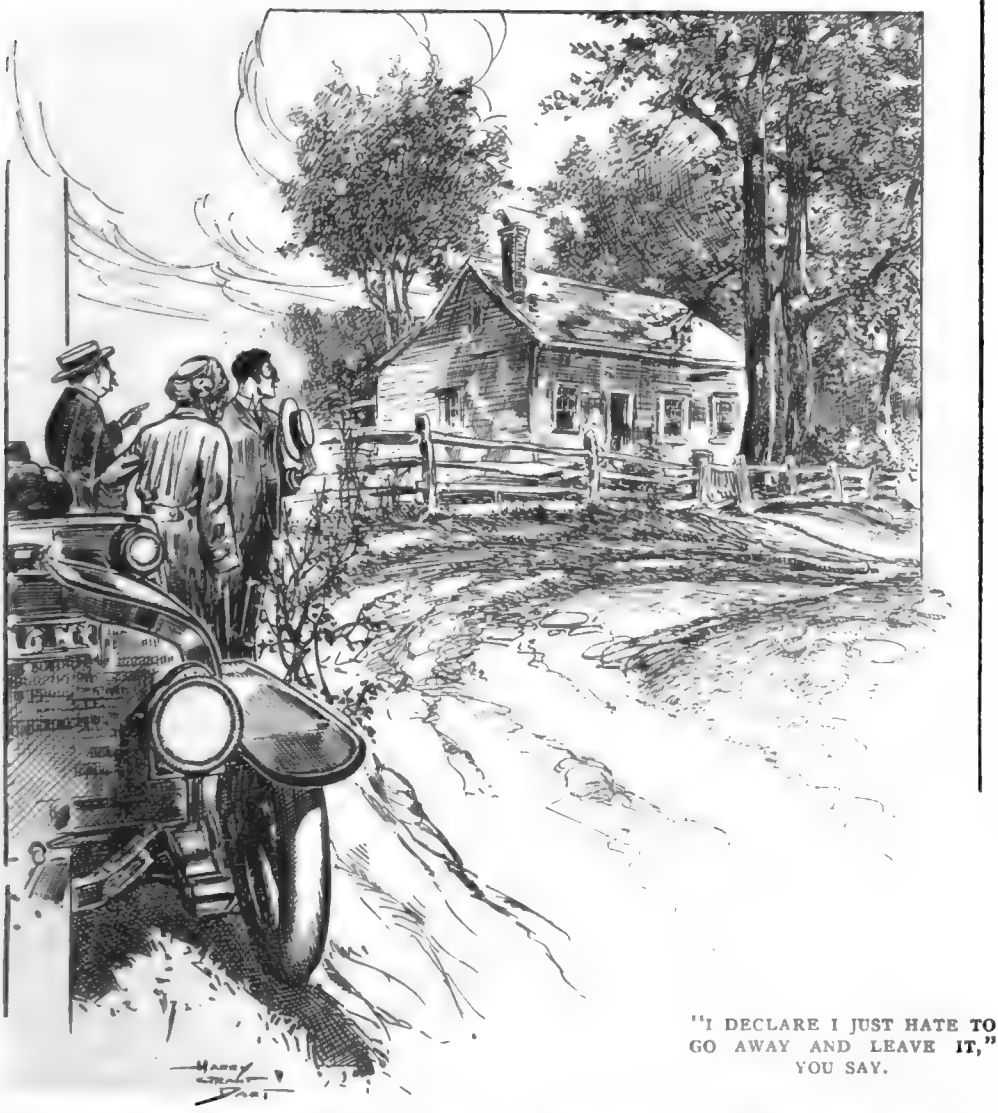

"I DECLARE I JUST HATE TO GO AWAY AND LEAVE IT," YOU SAY.

The cherry-bucket makes a little better time because it has no pants to tear *en route*. The cherries in the bucket and the breath in your body are bounced out with equal suddenness.

It is seldom, though, that both are a total loss. One should always remember in falling out of a cherry-tree to keep the tongue well back in the mouth. Otherwise the teeth, being occluded violently, are apt to snip off the tongue-tip, which is that part of the organ of speech that produces the sound of "d" as in "Damn!"

Preliminary to picking fruit there are some other actions which come under the general head of Labor. No tree thrives with its roots tangled up with twitch-grass, and twitch-grass is of all the vegetable kingdom the least discourageable. There is stirring up the soil about the roots, which heightens the activity of the sweat-glands. Then there is pruning, which follows the simple rule: Cut away all you dare, and then cut away twice as much more. Mind, I do not say this is the correct rule, but anyway it is the simple rule. It will

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also make the muscles ache if persisted in.

But all else pales into insignificance compared with spraying. That *is* work. It's a new thing; just come up recently. I do not think our fathers would have even cracked a smile if you had propounded to them this query: What is worse than to bite into an apple and find a worm? Answer: To bite into an apple and find half a worm. But such is the Sybaritic softness of the age that we have grown kind of fussy about such things; we insist upon the all-round application of the Pure-Food Law. Also, the march of progress has brought us the San José scale.

So three times a year you spray your fruit-trees—in the fall, in early spring, and just at the exact moment when the petals fall, avoiding on the one hand poisoning the bees that set the fruit, and on the other hand giving the codling-moth opportunity to provide for her family. Thrice in a year you must find a time when all the winds are hushed so you can pump that lime-and-sulphur liquid in a fine mist from the bucket on the ground to the topmost twig. This still and solemn hour is usually about four A.M., when you might be in better business.

Dress for the occasion from the skin outward in duds you have no hope or wish to wear again, for the stuff dyes the color of a horse's blanket and smells like blue blazes. Look out you don't get any of it in your eyes: that's why you spray in calm weather. It is powerfully acrid and puckery, so much so that when it gets on your hair and you go to comb it, it squeaks like a fiddle.

When you have a little bit of a garden-patch in town, what the women would call a "runner" between the clothes-poles and the fence, it's simply wonderful what you get out of it; when you have a great big garden-patch on a commuter's farm, it's simply wonderful what you don't get out of it. One word will make this seeming paradox quite rational: Expectations.

When the man says, "Come out back, I want to show you something," and you think it's going to be foolish geraniums, and he shows you real, live tomato vines with genuine edible tomatoes on them, it almost takes your breath away. (You can get it back, though, if he grows onions, too.) Peas enough to give the family a taste all round—why, it's like finding money in the street. And if the intensive culturist has gone and planted corn all round the fence, and everywhere a stalk will stick, until there's pretty nearly a whole mess of roasting ears, the neighborhood gets goggle-eyed and drops its hands into its lap with, "Did you *ever!*"

But a whole half-acre in the country—why, man alive! you ought to pretty near make your living off of that. You read up what Krapotkin says, and this other fellow—what's his name? *You* know. The man that wrote, "Three Boxes of Dirt, and Feed your Family."

Now, take potatoes. Say you put one-fourth of your whole garden into potatoes. That's an eighth of an acre. You ought to get by intensive culture a yield at the rate of four hundred bushels to the acre. Sometimes they run as high as five hundred, or is it fifteen hundred? No matter. Call it four hundred. That's fifty bushels. Now don't tell me your family will eat a bushel a week. Why, you ought never to buy another spud. Store 'em down cellar, and pick 'em over from time to time to sort out the rotten ones.

Same way with cabbages and beets and turnips and things like that. Parsnips you can leave in the ground all winter so that your cellar needn't be so crowded, what with coal and furnace and the like of that.

And there's your green stuff all summer long, and squashes and pumpkins for pumpkin pies, and melons, and all the small fruit that your wife can put up in her odd moments.

And there's the chickens. I don't suppose you can grow *all* the grain they'd need, and have a garden too; but the table-scraps will go a long ways, and all the trimmings of the vegetables; and think of the fresh eggs, and broilers and roasters!

And there's a cow. Pasturage hard to get? What? With all these vacant lots around? Even so, there's your lawn-clippings, and you could grow what they call soiling-crops that you cut and carry to the cow. She won't eat more than twice her weight a day, and all the time, mind you, if you keep the cow-house clean you're adding to the fertility of your garden.

Why, as I say, you ought to pretty near make your living off half an acre.

Well. . . Ha! . . It doesn't quite come up to that. Not the first season. But then you must make some allowances for the weather. Everything burned to a crisp.

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You hardly got your bait back. Not a speck of rain from Decoration Day till 'way long in October, and after that everything was swimming. Nobody can make a garden without *some* rain. Or, maybe, it did nothing but rain, rain, rain the whole enduring time till shoes in the closet got blue-molded and the potatoes were all tops. Nobody can make a garden without *some* sun.

Or, like enough, there was rain enough and sun enough, as far as that goes, but badly distributed—dry as ashes when it should have been moist, and wet as sop when it should have been bright and dry. It seems an awful thing to say, but I do think there is as little judgment shown in handing out the weather as anything I know of; that is, from the viewpoint of a commuter's farm.

I can't help thinking, too, that to a certain extent you were to blame. You let the weeds get ahead of you. They'll do that if you give 'em half a chance. They'll take advantage of your good nature. Yet you know, or you ought to know—you've been told it often enough anyhow—that there is nothing so healthful and invigorating to the system as exercise in the open air. You should have been out with your hoe every morning before sunup, and Night should have found you pulling weeds by lantern-light.

You see, weeds are not merely passive competitors with garden-sass, sucking up nutriment that what you planted should have had; they are active competitors, excreting toxins that make the soil sick. In a garden, competition must be eliminated, I don't care what the Sherman Law says.

"YOU PLANTED 'EM UPSIDE DOWN."

If the undevout astronomer is mad, what shall be said of the *laissez-faire* topiarius who cries: "Go it, corn! Go it, ragweed! And may the best man win!"

And it isn't only hoeing to get rid of weeds, but hoeing to keep the moisture in the soil with a dust-mulch. I fear you kind o' neglected to do that after every shower as soon as the soil was dry enough to handle. There were clods in your garden, I'll bet on it, that you could crack a safe with.

Still, being your first season, you had a thing or two to learn. The way you laid that garden out you had tomatoes more than you knew what to do with, but nothing like enough green corn; you had Swiss chard to feed a county, but ran short of turnips. And you know now—don't you?—why your Limas were so everlasting long in coming up.

"Why," says your next-door neighbor, leaning over the fence, "no wonder, man. Look at 'em."

"What's wrong with them?"

"You planted 'em upside down."

Sure enough! They're backing their way up through the ground. Next time you'll know better.

I tell you: It isn't only Labor that is a factor in production, meaning by that using your muscles till you're so tuckered you don't know which end's up; it's Labor-*Power*, head-work, knowing *how*. Knowledge is Power.

It's the same with chickens and a cow. Certainly you must have chickens and a cow. You can't get your degree in the scientific course without them. Boughten eggs in the country can be just as funny-tasting as boughten eggs in town; I don't

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know but more so. And the village milkman's milk— Don't let's talk about it. I always try to avoid the pathological. It's too morbid, cholera-morbid.

I will say right here that keeping chickens is a shade more intricate than throwing corn in and taking eggs out. Poultry saves on the butcher's bill, but there are lots and lots of conscientious vegetarians who date their conversion to the time they had to kill a fowl and dress it—undress it, rather.

And there are a few little things about a cow it takes a while to learn. Eliminate all but the act of milking. Eliminate from that the language, which would have to be eliminated anyhow if it was at all an accurate report of what is said when you are all done except that northwest teat that she's so touchy about. Eliminate all but the mere act of expressing the lacteal fluid into the pail.

It's a simple act. Encircle the teat with thumb and forefinger; tighten; then progressively squeeze with second, third, and fourth fingers in the order named, at the same time pulling gently downward.

You should get a broad white tape that purrs and gurgles in the frothing pail; instead you get about a Number 60 thread that faintly tinkles on the tin.

But keep it up. You'll learn in a few weeks provided you don't dry the cow up first. But before you master the technique of it, your second, third, and fourth fingers, all unaccustomed to grasping vigorously a handle far too small for them, will cramp up, stiff as sticks, and your arms will ache you to the shoulder. How do they stand it who milk a dozen cows a day?

How do they stand it who produce any of the realities of life by which we live and move and have our being?

Is it worth while to buy a farm when all that work attaches to it? Why, most assuredly. Only the crassest materialist will justify the purchase by the creature comforts to be got out of it. As to that, there is room for difference of opinion. You have bushels of strawberries to the town-folks' quarts; that is true, but they are eating them while you are only hunting for the blossoms; your radishes are hotter and tougher than theirs are, your tomatoes cracked, and something too much of core; your "cukes" grow gnarly; your green corn doesn't run even, there are many nubbins, many ears monstrously puffed with a black fungus, and on the platter they range from what is 'most too old to eat to mere fever-blisters on the cob.

And at their best—take peas, for example, right off the vines. Some rave about them, but others consider them almost too rank. Or new-laid eggs: some think they aren't as full-flavored as storage eggs, and don't cook so quickly. Or morning's milk at breakfast: it's likely to be a little warm, and there's not a speck of cream to it. Or green corn just off the stalks: only an added care and responsibility. In town you take your time to get it ready for the table. What's an hour more or less when it'll taste like hog-corn anyhow? But on the farm you've got to have the pot a-bubbling; you've got to pick the ears and *run* with 'em to the house; you rip the husks off, strip the silk, and break the ends off—hurry, hurry, hurry! And what for? Merely to catch an evanescent flavor that induces one to eat eight ears, and butter as high as it is now. Just an added care and responsibility!

No. These things that perish with the using do not constitute the real reason why every one should buy a farm. Man does not live by bread alone or milk or butter or new-laid eggs or strawberries with the dew still on them or fresh garden-truck, though they help out considerable, I must admit. The beasts are satisfied to live by eating. But not Man: he wants more.

He wants to know what for a world he's living in. There is only one real way for him to find out. It is in vain that textbooks assure him that a pitcher, once it is broken, can never be the same again; the honor man, fresh out of college, will try to fit the shards together and rediscover the great truth. The knowingest Lothario is, after all, only a kid until he interrupts with, "Wait till I tell you what *my* youngster said"; and he that is so well-informed that he can tell you instantly which are the bonds to buy, is a mere greenhorn until experience teaches him that not the ownership of title-deeds or bits of fancy-printed paper, brings forth the kindly fruits of the earth, but head-work, and muscle-work.

Every one should buy a farm. Would that I could inscribe that sentiment in flaming characters upon the midnight sky, that all who are up that late at night might read—and heed—the legend:

"BUY A FARM!"

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The BREAKING POINT

by
MARY
HEATON
VORSE

ILLUSTRATIONS
BY
IRMA
DÉRÈMEAUX

"I NEVER BEFORE SEE NUTHIN' AS HAPPY AS DENNY GROGAN THAT DAY."

INSTEAD of proceeding at once into the sitting-room beyond the office of his friend, Mrs. Phelan, Lester Robinson lingered in the pawn-shop. He scented copy in the broad-shouldered youth who gripped the edge of the show-case until his knuckles showed white, while Mrs. Phelan appraised the contents of his dress-suit case.

The little place was heavy with the weight of his suspense. The universe shrank in the imaginative mind of Lester until there remained in the world only the blond boy, whose eyes were terrible with the hopeless tragedy of the young; Mrs. Phelan, with implacable placidity, examining the articles one after another; and Lester himself.

The shadow of the stranger's tragedy shut them out from all the normal activities of life, like a fog. He had not long lost the softness of boyhood. Some kind of outdoor sport had hardened him and put a few planes on his face, and had evidently broken his nose, which gave his countenance a pugnacious cast at variance with his mild eyes. He had evidently thrown everything of any value that he possessed into the dress-suit case. New clothes, a traveling set, a watch and stick-pins, were shoved in with a tumultuous disorder eloquent of their owner's mood, while scattered in this wreckage of a happy life were some trophy cups and medals.

He was about to take the money handed over to him and thrust it into his pocket without counting it when Mrs. Phelan spoke to him with the familiar authority of

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a well-disposed elderly relative: "Count the money I give you, an' take your ticket."

He obeyed as mechanically as an absorbed child obeys the voice of its mother; counted the money, murmured "Thank you," and made an exit like a furious wind, slamming the door behind him.

"That young man's up against it for fair," Lester remarked.

"*Him!*" returned Mrs. Phelan with scorn. "Him up against it! He's havin' the time o' his life."

She led the way into the sitting-room, glanced at the splendid example of the hair-dresser's art known to her as her "cwaffur", and seated herself with great calm, a hand on each knee.

"That lad's goin' to succar an' help a fair young thing in distress. I'm some Mrs. Sherlocko, bullieve me," she observed complacently. Sitting immovable, she seemed to Lester a slightly grotesque effigy of some puissant goddess, knowing the past and future of men and governing their destinies with a beneficent hand.

"Pooh!" said Lester. "I saw what you handed over the counter for that junk of his. You're sorry for him, too—I wouldn't care to be in his shoes."

"Don't worry, Mr. Rob'ns'n, your nut's screwed on too tight. You ain't goin' to have your rest distoibed none by the noise o' angels singin', like that poor, lucky, unforch'nit young man. He's the kind that otta die young. *Now* he's got ev'rything down to a broken heart; an' w'at's he goin' to do w'en he gets old?

"I'll tell you how I come to know so much about him. You know why I give him what I did—it's for the rest o' the soul o' poor Denny Grogan; besides, he's the kind o' young man that, lef' to myself, I'd 'a' fell in love with w'en I was a young fool. Only, lucky enough f'r me, Phelan come along an' tucked me under one arm an' walked me right up to Father Kelley without stoppin' to listen to no nonsense. An' in them days, before I begun takin' on flesh, Phelan could 'a' done it easy."

Mrs. Phelan brooded on the past, then continued:

"So, havin' a natchrul leanin' t'ward them kind, I know how they feel an' think—even if I hadn't have known Denny Grogan; an' knowin' Denny Grogan, I know this boy that just slammed out like a baby cyclone. I know about him now, an' w'at's worse, I know about him to come. An' I tell you, Mr. Rob'ns'n, that boy there is the kind that can't be happy without their heart's boistin'. It's to them like booze is to some; it don't make much matter w'at yah fill 'em up with so's they get full."

"If it hadn't been for his broken nose and the heft of him, I'd have taken him for a poet," Lester remarked.

"*Pote!*" said Mrs. Phelan scornfully. "He's the kind o' stuff, w'en it's goils, that potes make their livin' off of! 'Gee!' they sez, 'ain't it fierce my love's lyin' dead an' killed herself f'r the love o' me, but won't it all make a gran' pome!' I know *potes!* No one can keep a pawn-shop in this part o' town an' not know *potes*. Potes is a mean, blood-suckin' lot, an' I don't give 'um a cent more'n I c'n help."

Lester shifted himself uncomfortably.

"Poh! Don't take it to heart, Mr. Rob'ns'n," Mrs. Phelan admonished him. "*You* ain't no pote—just writin' rhymes don't make no pote out 'v a *man*. I'll tell yah a story about a pote some time, but now listen to the story o' Denny Grogan, for folks like you an' me won't feel nothin' but a shadder o' his feelin's in all our lives long, an' you an' me otta be green-eyed w'en we see folks like that young man that was makin' kindlin's out o' my door a minnit ago.

"The mind o' man's mysterious, but 'twas Denny Grogan that made me reelize how mysterious it is.

"Now, a man by the name o' Denny otta be black Irish, to my mind, an' the Grogans come from County Cork, an' however they got mixed up with the McGahans from the Seven Vales o' Antrim I can't tell yah, for I don' know; but they say that Antrim an' Cork fought back an' forth in battles that you could hear through half the county. An' the same battle went on fightin' itself an' boilin' in the heart an' brain o' Denny Grogan.

"The foist time I seen him, me an' Phelan bumped inter him an' his bride on the board-walk to Coney Island. Phelan knew him.

" 'W'ere you goin'?' says Phelan.

" 'I'm headed wherever you are,' sez he, an' smiles at Edna. That smile made my heart kinda ache. Seems like all the beautiful things you ever heard of was in the way he smiled at her—trustin'-eyed like a

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kid at its ma, an' with love like a man's an' a woman's both.

" 'My!' sez I to Phelan—we was walkin' behind 'em—'they kinda make my heart ache.'

" 'W'at for?' sez he, su'prised.

" 'You know w'at life does to folks,' sez I.

" 'I know you're kinda spoons on that young chap,' sez Phelan. That was him—always hittin' the nail on the head with a hammer heavy enough to boist open a safe. That kind of a man's w'at a woman like me needs to harden up on. Mush was w'at I was, Mr. Rob'ns'n, before Phelan learned me life.

"I never before see, an' never hope to see, nuthin' as happy as Denny Grogan that day. You'll know how high-steppin' an' glad-hearted he was w'en I tell you that we hadn't gone two blocks before Denny picked a fight with a couple o' fellahs who jostled us, an' him an' Phelan tuk 'em in to one o' them hundreds o' homelike little shows they usta have in the old times down to Coney—your ma musta ben liftin' your skoits to spank yah about that time, Mr. Rob'ns'n—where Phelan knew the folks, an' Denny Grogan licked both o' them men an' set 'em up to drinks in the nex' fifteen minnits, while us ladies set kinda embarrassed. Phelan's eyes was shinin' w'en he come back.

" 'Gawd!' he sez, 'there's not many's got the punishin' fist o' Denny.'

"That was Denny that day, ready to fight the woild or treat the woild, an' lovin' the woild, fightin' or treatin'. None of us four knew w'at it was to stop laffin' or knew w'at it was to be tired. An' Edna—I saw her pretty eyes glancin' an' gleamin'.

" 'Pore thing,' I thinks. 'This is w'at she thinks life is w'en you're married—a tangle o' stars an' lights an' fightin' an' treatin' an' lovin', until your heart can't hold no more. I'd lived long enough an' ben married long enough an' seen enough

"HE FOUND HIM SITTIN' IN HIS ROOM, *LOOKIN'*."

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in my sister's hair-dressin' parlors to know better; but Edna was usta excitement.

"She'd ben playin' in a show w'en Denny met her. He'd seen her one night, met her the second, married her the thoid, an' sence had acted like he had come down here from makin' the stars with his own han's, jes' for the fun o' flattenin' out men's faces with his glad fists. That was how County Cork showed in him, an' that's w'at give him the dash an' made his heart burn white hot, in love or hate. An' the Vales o' Antrim made him dream dreams, an' made him want to sit quiet in his house.

"Now Edna had the restless eye, an' she was innercent—no matter what she done, she stayed innercent as the day she was born, an' she didn't have no place in her where there lived any 'No!' 'Twas always easier for her to do w'at anybuddy asked her up to a certain point, than say 'No.' Now if she hadn't ben all these—restless an' innercent an' easy—ev'rythin' mighta ben all right.

"W'at made her ak' like she did? She didn't know.

"Denny Grogan knew, more'n anybuddy, becuz he loved her. Think o' her havin' the kind o' love all soft-hearted women from all times prays God on their knees for, an' so few gettin' it, an' her wastin' it like she done! Oh, ain't life fierce! An' her knowin' w'at she was wastin' an' not bein' able to help it!

"Well, I remember w'en she left him to go back on the stage. I dunno who she went with. Phelan heard of it an' went lookin' f'r Denny. He found him sittin' in his room, *lookin'*. He smiled sorta silly at Phelan an' got up when Phelan told him to an' follered him back to our flat like a child. He'd crack your heart to see him settin' like he done—like he was stunned, smilin' a puzzled sort o' smile. Many an' many times I wisht he was a goil an' could have a good fit o' high-strikes an' get better; but he jes' set there, never a woid out o' him.

"He had pluck. I never see a man yammer less with all life done to him. But the light in his heart was out. Folks w'at had known him didn't recko'nize him on the street. Frien's w'at had run after him so they could feel happy because he did, fell away from him like the leaves off a dead tree.

"Now you'd think that was enough; but Edna was more crool than that. She come back to him. After awhile Denny begun to be happy again in a new way. Where he'd ben more happy like Cork before, he was mostly Antrim now; but County Cork would 'a' served him better. Edna wouldn't 'a' got res'less again like she done.

"W'en she was gone the second time, no mortal could get near to Denny Grogan. He held up his head; no one knew what was in his heart.

" 'She's a bad lot,' sez Phelan.

" 'Gawd!' sez I, 'I wisht she was—he'd leave her an' the thought o' her.'

"You see, I knew night an' day he was with Edna, all along o' her innercence. She didn't no more *feel* w'at all this fuss about virtue was over!

" 'You make me tired,' I sez to Phelan. 'You're so usta seein' women cut all of a piece, an' carin' for a man the same sort o' way, you can't see how a girl like Edna can ak' like she does an' not be a bad lot.'

"The woist of it was, Denny Grogan understood. Mebbe 'twas the best, too. Sometimes I think o' the love o' them pore childrun like one o' the beautiful things I've seen in life; mebbe 'twas more beautiful w'en 'twas battered up an' pounded an' used.

"Where was I? Oh, I was sayin' how he set in his room. Then one day he come rushin' to me—an' that's w'en I foist got my idea of a pawn-shop—an' he asked me please to take his things an' pawn 'em, for Gawd's sake. He'd come to us because he'd been with us when Edna left him before, an' he was actin' like some high-grade machine economizin' time, for all the woild like that boy was in here, though not so strung up. I felt like ev'rything he'd ben an' thought an' felt had ben gettin' him ready for this moment.

" 'Edna's got a baby,' he sez; 'they're both dyin', an' I'm goin' to 'em!'

"They was way out West somewheres, an' Gawd knows w'at he suffered goin' to 'em. But Edna didn't die—not that time. Denny hadn't ben hurt enough. The kid lived for a while an' grew to be pretty an' the image o' him, except it had black Grogan hair; but the flame o' life was feeble in it. An' jes' w'en money—lots o' money—might 'a' saved it, Denny's partner lit out with most ev'rything he had.

"Denny made good, but the kid died.

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"'I SEE WHAT AILS YOU,' SEZ I. 'THE SOUL O' YOU'S DRIED UP LIKE A LITTLE WIZENED PEANUT. YOU'RE A FAKE.'"

"'Gawd!' sez he, 'w'at's the curse on me? I never thought no harm to no one.'

"Then come a time w'en life let up on him. The res'lessness had ben tried outa Edna an' she had another baby—a goil, the image o' her. Foist, I think he was afraid to be happy out loud; but the singin' in his heart would boist outa his mouth. He couldn't help but show it, an' pore innercent Edna would look at him sorta wild-eyed till the sight o' them two hoit me more'n at foist. In his heart he knew it couldn't last. I felt it about him, but I thought she'd get res'less on him again. I never thought he'd come home an' find the flat-house where he was livin', afire, an' Edna an' the kid suffocated in the smoke.

"They say he behaved like a madman. He would 'a' bust through the *po*-lice, an' thrown hisself in the fire, but w'en Phelan got holda him, he was ca'm. He was ca'm w'en he come in where I was.

"'W'at can I do to help you, Denny Grogan?' I cried out, sobbin'.

"He crumbled to pieces before me. 'Gimme rest!' he sez. 'Gimme rest—I ain't had no rest in years.'

"The nex' mornin' the face on him was

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shinin'. I never see no one look like him. All he'd suffered an' loved, all the potry he'd lived, was in the way he looked at me. An' I always thought, Mr. Rob'ns'n, that that was the way he was meant to be. He'd otta went to war or ben a priest or some o' them things, with that face o' his.

" 'Good-by!' sez he. 'I'm goin' to try an' have a rest.'

"But before nightfall he was restin' in a hospital with brain fever. No, he didn't come near me w'en he went West after he got well——"

Mrs. Phelan stopped, and her eyes were fixed on the shadows that were crowding the corners of the little room, turning the fat, upholstered chairs into squat monsters and passing a simplifying hand over the pictures and ornaments.

"I never see him again till two years ago I run into him walkin' with a lady an' two toddlin' babies.

" 'Denny Grogan,' sez I, 'is it you?' For he was the same, an' yet diff'runt. He'd tuk on flesh—well, so had I; but he looked 's if he was makin' money as fast as a licker-dealer. Now, men like Denny make money, but they hadn't otta look 's if they done it.

" 'My wife,' sez he, 'Mis' Phelan,' presentin' the lady to me. She was a little brown hen of a motherly woman who wouldn't 'a' known Denny from Antrim from Denny from Cork.

" 'My kids,' he sez. An' meetin' me after all them years, he acted like he'd forgot the last time we seen each other. There wasn't no rush to him of no pain nor no pleasure in seein' me, an' he asked for my address that prefunc'try, I was hoit.

"Jes' the same, a couple o' days later he come into the shop an' he set down by the fire, an' after we'd said the kinda things folks hafta get off their chests w'en they ain't met for long, he set lookin' into the flames an' I swear the way he looked at that fire give me the creeps.

" 'You begun life over, Denny?' I sez. I had to give him a jolt, tac' or no tac'.

" 'Hev I?' he sez. 'It's the foist I hoid of it.' An' there wasn't no more life to his tone than there's music in a stick o' wood.

"I didn't answer him, bein' taken aback. After a long time he sez, *'How is it a man c'n go on livin' w'en he's dead?* I thought because my arms was strong I could live like I seen other men live; I thought it would be easy to make money an' eat an' sleep an' marry. An' I've done 'em all.'

"He set in this very room lookin' sleek an' prosp'rus, an' he talked like that! Bimeby he sez:

" 'D'yah know w'at my life makes me think of? It's like a place I dream about. It's a big round plain, pale 's the moon, an' as cold, an' there's not a living thing that moves there. It's jes' even an' cold an' shiny.'

"He spoke as level as a smooth-runnin' sewin'-machine, an' I felt the goose-flesh risin' on me, but I sez, flip—I *had* to talk flip: 'I tell you w'at ails you, Denny. You ben hittin' the booze. You didn't usta be a drinkin' man.'

" 'I ain't one now, worse luck,' sez he. 'I always got sicker 'n a pup before the habit could get a grip on me. Don't think I didn't try. I'm perserverin'—an' w'en I seen hell changed to heaven for men after a few stiff ones I went to it. 'Twas no use!'

"I can't tell yah how regretful he spoke them woids.

" 'Well,' sez I, 'you sound like the place where yesterday's hang-over meets to-day's katzenjammer, an' I tell you that the trimmin's is only two blocks down an' one door to the right from there.'

" 'Lord!' sez he. 'I'd be glad to see a pink elephant crawlin' across my panarammer.'

" 'W'at's eatin' you?' sez I. 'Honest now—w'at's got you? I seen you in trouble, Denny—I seen you broke, an' the bitter waters runnin' so high over your head that I thought 'twas Amen-day for you. I seen the tender heart o' you bleedin' 's if 't had been put through the hamburg-chopper. Yes,' I sez, 'an' I've held your hand w'en you buried your foist-born; but I've never seen yah as bad as this, Denny. W'at's come to yah?'

"He took a slip of a newspaper cuttin' out 'v his pocket, an' held it out to me, an' I read: 'DESERTED BY LOVER, GOIL SEEKS DEATH UNDER ENGINE WHEELS!'

" 'See that!' he sez. 'I can't never feel like that no more. Gawd!' he sez, 'I've had a thoist f'r death that's been woise 'n any thoist I've known. An' I've stayed alive an' stood my pain an' fought off killin' myself from one hour to another, an' w'en I read this, it come over me—*I can't feel nothin'!*'

" 'You're belly-achin' because you can't

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suffer no more—you're hard to please, Denny,' I sez; but I felt the palm o' my hand get damp at his singsong tone.

"He nodded at me solemn:

" 'If I'd 'a' found this a year from now it might 'a' ben too late. The body o' me eats an' sleeps an' woiks, an' the soul o' me an' all that makes me a man is dead, I tell you.'

" 'An' you with a wife an' two sweet childrun!' I boist out on him.

"He nods his head: 'She's a good woman—she's a good woman.'

" 'Mebbe,' says I, 'you're havin' regrets for Edna.' I thought this might 'a' shook him, for the looks o' him scared me. An' there's nothin' like fear to make a person bite. I wanted to see him mad. I wanted to see him *somethin'*. The way he answered me showed he was tellin' the truth. He never flinched at Edna's name. All he said was—laughin' short an' hard:

" 'Gawd, I'd give my right hand for a regret. Remorse or sorrah'd taste sweet t' me. I c'n look back an' remember my fingers itchin' so f'r a man's throat that I've had to smash in the ugly face of him to keep me from killin' him, an' I only wonder that this was me. Lord!' he sez, 'my heart's ben soft an' my fists 've ben hard, an' now I c'n only see the man I was 's if I was in a dream. The heart o' me's bled its life away.'

" 'Your stommick's in good shape,' sez I, flip again.

" 'Yes,' sez he, 'my stommick's fine for ev'rything but booze. I eat three meals ev'ry day—an' when my boy calls me "Pa" it's 's if he was talkin' to some one else.'

" 'I see w'at ails you,' sez I. 'The soul o' you's dried up like a little wizened peanut, Denny Grogan. You're a fake. You ain't a man.' I spoke sarcastic, kinda sick of havin' his shiv'ry talk get on my noives. 'I know w'at'd cure you.'

" 'An' w'at's that?' he asks.

" 'W'at you need's a cyanide cocktail—that's the medicine f'r your brand, that ain't got nothin' in the woild but health an' money, an' nothin' to live for but a wife an' childrun.'

"An' as I spoke them woids I got madder an' madder at him, woikin' me up over nothin' when I see real misr'y enough ev'ry day to make me grudge myself bread. Honest to Gawd, if I knew the hist'ry of ev'rything I take in, I'd be cryin' all day long. An' most of 'em's so alike. Mis'ry repeats itself.

"Say, Mr. Rob'ns'n, w'at's wrong with things? There was Denny who lifted his head up in the midst of trouble enough to kill ten, an' now with the woild treatin' him right he froze my heart an' made the roots o' my hair feel funny, settin' there an' lookin' in the fire. Why, in trouble or happy, Denny Grogan had ben one to thank Gawd for. When I'd ben down an' out I thought o' him an' the way trouble didn't do nothin' to him but raise him up. I was tryin' to frame up somethin' like that to say when he tuk out a watch, natchrul.

" 'F'r old times,' he sez, 'will you let me leave the watch with you I left you to soak f'r me long ago? I'm in need of a dollar or two an' it's far from home.'

"Mr. Rob'ns'n, the high-strikes riz up in my throat an' most choked me, in broad daylight with him standin' with his light overcoat open showin' a vest you could 'a' hoid a mile—an' the high-strikes riz on me:

"'Not me, Denny Grogan, not me!' I cried out.

" 'Well, some one else will,' he sez. 'Good-by,' he sez, an' smiles kinda like Denny from Antrim.

"An' he went an' pawned his watch at Guggenheim's two blocks up, an' bought a revolver an' shot hisself in a room in a hotel.

"F'r he'd reached his limit, an' his limit come when he reelized w'at 'd come to him. He wasn't the stuff they make pomes out 'v no more, an' he couldn't stand it. He'd stood without flinchin' all I've told, an' Lord knows what blackness beyond blackness, an' lived through it. But the heart in him was bled dry, an' he could hear it rattle against his ribs, an' life was empty to him of meanin' like it is to most folks. An' that was his breakin'-point.

"That's w'y I sez that boy who tumbled ev'rything over the counter an hour ago don't need no pity yet. Wait till he can't feel no more, *an' knows it!*

"There's many an' many a Denny Grogan floatin' round, w'at haven't no more to live for than him. But Gawd's better to them an' let's 'em ferget youth an' love—He lets 'em ferget an' go on livin' to eat an' drink; an' when I see a roomful o' hawgs sometimes I think Gawd was kind to Denny Grogan after all."

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EMPIRE

by

CHARLES SAXBY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HENRY REUTERDAHL

ALL the way to Abossu, Hewitt was increasingly conscious that he was approaching not so much a place as a personality.

The journey itself was like a plunge back into the forests of the Coal Age, as depicted in the text-books of his youth. An overwhelming fecundity of waters and monstrous plants; an amphibious maze of yellow river and black-green Bush, seen under a depressing blaze of sunlight that seemed only to darken the shadows. All sense of

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locality was lost, swamped under that avalanche of vegetation, and he found himself reaching out for relief, across the spaces in which there seemed to be no room, to the human figure of Donald Hamilton.

From boyhood he had been familiar with Hamilton's name, which ever and again flashed, meteor-like, across the pages of the newspapers and always in connection with some brilliant exploit in the still mysterious interior of Africa. Hewitt had seen his photographs, too, as served up in the illustrated journals. But of the real man he had only a suddenly discovered ignorance.

Though he had been only three months in Africa he had already mastered one of its great facts: that, in the complete absence of white women, the white men were strangely dependent upon one another. There were women in plenty, to be sure, women of all shapes and colors, but they were just women; for all else the men must go to one another. That they so seldom found it, was merely a part of that general African hopelessness which he had also discovered.

And Hewitt, only twenty-three, his boyish sensitiveness and imagination enlarged tenfold by his sudden plunge into the strange continent, was aware of a tremendous need for just those things.

For seventeen days the little *Indomitable* —half tin kettle, half bulldog—grunted her way up the reaches of the Prahsu while Hewitt, his feet aching for relief from her sizzling, boiler-plate decks, irritatedly cursed the whole contraption. Hemmed in by the changeless wall of forest, with no occupation but a ceaseless fight against the swarms of insects, his mind sought relief in recollection and conjecture. Like the river itself, there seemed for him no present worth speaking of; it was all past and future.

He remembered Accrome, with its muddled barbarism and pseudo-civilization of a West African coast capital. The huge bulk of the Castle that would have dwarfed St. Paul's itself. The surrounding houses, with their dilapidated, arcaded fronts; a few smart bungalows, and the final welter of huts fading out into the scrub-covered hills. Gaunt trees, covered with dry, rattling pods, the perpetual roar of the surf, crowds of sullen negroes, white men in rickshaws, pallid from the heat. Glare and color and noise; then the plunge into the corridors of the Castle, with their swinging, green half-doors, dim and cool with an atmosphere of rigid precedence and secrecy.

That had impressed him the most: the secrecy, the impossibility of ever finding out. The sense of things hidden, not by walls or bars, but behind cool, tired eyes and formally smiling lips. The feeling of being a mere cog in a machine, entirely ignorant of one's real relation to the whole; the steady, remorseless grind of the machinery of government and the invisibility of the real power that turned it.

Then, before he had time to adjust himself or become accustomed, had come his sudden promotion. It was just a glorious piece of luck—think of it, only three months in the service and jumped from a customs' clerkship to a district commissionership!

And Hamilton was the commandant at Abossu; he would be with him up there.

He looked Abossu up on the map—a tiny dot on the snaky wrigglings of the Prahsu, close to a white space marked "Independent Territory of Bontuku." It was right on the edge, a veritable outpost of empire; there would be chances—chances; and the monotonous depression of the Bush would fade as his eyes filled with visions, those glorious, unconfessed visions of youth, promissory notes against the future that we all issue, but so few redeem.

It was sheer luck, everybody had said so, and they had given him a dinner in celebration. He went over it in retrospect, tasting it again from the pitiful kid, which masqueraded as mutton, to the iceless champagne.

There had been curious consequences from that warm wine and from a curious source: a man he had never seen before, a judge of some kind from Animaboe, one of those queer, born West Coasters who had been thirty years in the Colony, seeming to thrive on what was most men's death. All through dinner he had sat and said nothing, gulping the tepid champagne, but at times Hewitt had caught his eyes upon him—black, lashless eyes, as full of malicious knowledge as a crow's.

At the end of the evening Hewitt, standing alone, had seen the judge approaching him with a devious gravity, steadying his way with flapping motions of his bent elbows.

"So you're going t' Abossu—eh?" he said, peering sarcastically into Hewitt's face.

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A CEASELESS DRIP OF SWEAT, A CLOUD OF INSECTS THAT TRAVELED ALWAYS JUST IN FRONT OF HIS EYES, THE YELLOW DAZZLE OF THE RIVER, THE PERPETUAL, CHANGELESS WALLS OF FOREST.

"S'pose you want me congrat'late you—eh? H'm—what is it some old chap said? 'Distrust the gods'—no, Greeks—that's it—'Distrust the Greeks bringing gifts'—oh, yes, I'm drunk." And he answered the other's unspoken thought with a high-

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pitched giggle. " 'Wine's in, wit's out'—but I know things, m'boy—know too damn much. That's why get drunk. But they keep me because stand climate—who're your people?" he finished, with abrupt question.

Hewitt answered him briefly in the hope of getting rid of him; the man was disgusting to him somehow, not because he was drunk but by reason of a mental, almost physical, odor about him as of unpleasant knowledges that had died and were rotting in his brain.

"Army—eh?" the judge went on. " 'Portant people too—but not too 'portant. And nice lookin' boy—photograph look well 'n 'lustrated papers. Pop'lar sentiment 'n' all that—eh?" and he giggled again.

"What the devil are you talking about?" asked Hewitt shortly, and the judge leered archly at him.

"Talkin' too much—'tirely too much. Fine thing, young man, goin' t' Abossu jus' now—fine chance—French creepin' up—an' we want Bontuku. Got t' have it—Ham'lton knows that. Fine chap Ham'lton—fine chap, but don't get on. With 's services ought t' be general, guvnor, big bug some kind. 'Stead of that only captain 'perial service stuck off at Abossu—tell you why?"

The judge, tremendously confidential, leaned forward, steadying himself by an unwelcome hand on Hewitt's shoulder.

"Lis'en—'s this. Ham'lton sees too much—an' he don't come in. That won't do, you know—'f you know what's goin' on, why, get in boat 'n' go along—see? Me—I'm in—safe man 'n' all that. Well, good-by, m'boy—sha'n't see you again," and he wrung Hewitt's hand with almost tearful affection.

"Why—won't you be here when I come back?" Hewitt asked, politely concealing his relief.

"Me—oh, yes," the judge replied, tapping his damp shirt-front significantly. "It's you—see?—you. No comin' back from Abossu—not yet. Ham'lton an' Hewitt. Good names, look well 'n papers. Talkin' 'tirely too much—but then you're drunk too. F'get all 'bout it 'n mornin'." Then he swayed off again with that flapping motion of his crooked elbows which, in his rusty black evening suit, made him look more than ever like some unclean bird.

But Hewitt had been sober and he had not been able to forget; he found himself remembering with a persistence that he could not explain. Drunken maunderings, most of it, no doubt, but here and there, like pearls in a decaying oyster, were sentences stamped with the mark of truth.

Hamilton's services had been brilliant; other men, for far less, had been given great preferment while he was "stuck off at Abossu." Hewitt wondered what it might be that Hamilton, according to the judge, saw with a clearness of vision fatal to his own advancement.

II

In after years Hewitt found himself remembering Abossu as a red place—red ground, red trees, red people. It was really the earth, he knew, the sulky, greasy red of the exposed clay where the forest had been hewn from the little knoll.

There was a stockade, a regulation Government "Pattern B" bungalow perched high on brick pillars and flanked by a pitiful tennis-court all cracked by the sun. Some bamboo quarters for the Haussas, a flagstaff, and a couple of machine guns. Outside the stockade, a scattering of native huts among banana gardens, and the shorn stumps of the clearing. On one side the yellow river; on the other three the black green walls of the Bush with a fringe of gaunt, white corpses of trees.

To Hewitt it was just a setting for the figure of Donald Hamilton, and he breathed a silent sigh of relief as they shook hands.

A tall man, trim and erect in his khaki and puttees in spite of the premature graying of exhausting climates that had toned his hair and face to nearly the same shade of silver. The years of strain and hardship had fined him down until, to Hewitt, he gave the impression of a steel blade that had been worn to wafer thinness without changing its fine tempering. A man obviously born to dominance, bearing the indefinable stamp of breeding and race, and with it a hint of that inner, unspoken mysticism which so often comes to men who live much alone and face strange vicissitudes.

His greeting was formal, but there was an instant of direct, measuring gaze as each scanned the man who was to be his sole companion.

There was ample time ahead of them in which to turn to each other; and next day,

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as the little *Indomitable*, having landed her supplies, scurried off again down-stream, Hewitt realized how complete, if at all, that turning would have to be.

The launch's farewell toot as she disappeared was the snapping of the last link with the outside world. They were left, for four months alone together in that tangle of river and Bush, just the same for a thousand miles each way. That night as they sat on the veranda, facing their mutual solitude after the bustle of the launch's presence, they spoke for the first time of Hewitt's work.

"There is really nothing to do," said Hamilton. "There is no real district here at all. The country hasn't even been properly explored, and I have neither equipment nor authority to do it. You can't go ten yards in the Bush without cutting your way, except along the native paths—and they all lead to Bontuku, where we must not intrude as yet."

Hewitt gazed out at the compound, all gullied by the rains, visible only by a sort of phosphorescent shine as if the bare earth were rotting under the blanket of wet heat. Beyond rose the wall of the Bush, black against the stars; between him and it, unseen in the darkness, flowed the river, the only sign of its presence an occasional oily gurgle or a splash that told of a wallowing hippo.

And that darkness stretched limitlessly away on every side, unpeopled, unbroken. He seemed to feel it pressing in on him, kept at bay only by the feeble rays of the lamp at his elbow. "His Majesty's Commissioner for the District of Abossu." It had a sarcastic sound now—perhaps this was what that judge chap had meant that night in Accrome.

"But—why on earth did they send me here?" he burst out.

Hamilton was silent for a while. Hewitt had already noticed his habit of silences as if there were some inner place, inaccessible to others, to which he retired for consultation with himself before answering.

"I think they created Abossu a district to add to its political importance," said Hamilton at last. "You see, we are the very end up here—right next to Bontuku——"

"And the French are creeping up," Hewitt interjected.

Hamilton did not turn but stood there, staring out over the unseen river. "Ah—who told you that?"

"Chap in Accrome called Merrion," Hewitt replied, squirming a little as he recollected the other things that judge had said. "He was drunk."

"Oh—Merrion," and Hamilton smiled slightly. "Yes—he would be. Did he say anything more?"

"Yes—but then, as I said, he was hardly responsible."

Hamilton turned quietly to other things, but as they parted for the night he stopped, then came back to where Hewitt stood.

"Don't be disappointed," he said earnestly. "Remember that the Imperial Service is a hard taskmaster, but orders must be obeyed. Those in command at home see things with a wider sweep than we—or most of us at least—out here. Meanwhile—" and his hand fell lightly on the other's arm— "it means much to me to have a companion just now—one of the right sort," and he turned away, leaving Hewitt stiff and scarlet with delighted embarrassment.

From that moment he was Hamilton's, and he lay awake far into the night, his whole body in a glow of boyish adoration for his new-found hero. He wished something would happen, something sudden and vivid, that he might have an opportunity to show Hamilton what stuff he was of, that he might render him some signal service.

But it was fated that, in all their relationship, his part was to be receiving only. Later on he came to see that Hamilton, from the very first, had foreseen the end and that he himself was kept deliberately in ignorance that he might receive Hamilton's final gift.

As Hamilton had said, there was little to do except count the days until the launch's next trip with a four months' stack of mail and magazines. The excitement, the vicissitudes that Hewitt had vaguely pictured as being part of life at a frontier post were almost entirely absent; the country seemed deserted, steeped in a spell of dead inaction like that false elemental lull which precedes a tropical storm.

There was the formal routine of the little post, with its garrison of twenty Haussas; an occasional chastisement to be administered among the huts outside the stockade, a weekly hunt up-river for hippo meat for

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the niggers. For the rest, a never-ending, shoulder-to-shoulder fight against the depression and license of that primal land.

It was in this endless, ever-recurring battle that Hamilton's steel-white tempering shone out so that Hewitt, in a genuine humility, thanked the luck that had thrown him with such a man in this, his first experience of the real wilderness. They tasted of their companionship temperately, sipping it at intervals like a rare wine. There were great reserves, doors kept closed out of mutual respect as they closed the doors of their bedrooms. But in the evenings, dank and suffocating as if the fever-stricken earth were breaking out in a night-sweat, they sat on the veranda together, and the hours that would have been a torment became a delight as Hamilton talked.

To Hewitt it had all the fascination of the far-off and unknown, with the added charm of having happened to the man at his side. Snatches of the secret history of Africa, stories of his famous defense of Gondokoro against the Khalifa, of his equally famous forced march on Kenia that, by a scant margin of hours, saved to the Empire from German occupation a country as wide as France. Then beneath the surface, flashes of insight into the mysteries of those strange, underground religious empires whose power beats even against the walls at Accrome. The shouts and banners of Islam amidst the gold and blue spaces of the north; monstrous rites of fetish sprouting, like fungoids, amidst the dripping mazes of the Bush.

Once he spoke of Bontuku, whose undefined boundaries lay so close to them: of its leagues of untouched rubber forest, its placer gold, its mud-walled capital, and its King Amory—a wily old savage squirming like a rat in a trap between the encroaching white powers.

"And we want Bontuku," Hewitt exclaimed, delighted at being thus admitted to discussion of the *haute politique* of Africa.

"We *must* have it," said Hamilton gravely. "It is merely a question of time."

"Then why don't we take it?" asked Hewitt. "Why wait until the French push farther down from Tomboctoo and run the risk of a row with them over it?"

"We have no pretext as yet," Hamilton replied, and to Hewitt's puzzled echo of "No pretext?" he merely rose and walked away to the steps. It was long before he spoke, so long that it seemed as if he might never again speak of his own volition.

Hewitt, in the darkness and that silence which was so much more oppressive than the mere absence of any one to speak, was again conscious of the feeling that he was being shut out, that the other was turning over his knowledge and selecting what to tell.

Before his inner eyes there flashed a picture of that night in Accrome, of the judge, with his half-sinister giggle and his reiterated "Ham'lton sees too much." It was queer how it stuck in his memory like a burr, ever and again cropping up and always in connection with some trivial action of Hamilton's.

It was true, too, he felt; there were times, like the present, when Hamilton's atmosphere simply reeked of it. And he himself saw so little, only the surface at that. What was the meaning, for instance, of Abossu? Why were they stuck down here instead of at some one of a score of other places, more accessible and in every way more desirable? Orders from home—yes, but why? There must be a reason and he was pretty sure that Hamilton knew it.

But he would not tell it, though even his silences could not conceal his knowledge; it hung about him like a contagion, and Hewitt, with a queer bubbling under his breast-bone, suddenly felt that with another instant of that silence it would spring upon him, strike into his own brain. He realized, too, that that was really the last thing he wanted to have happen, that he was clinging to his ignorance as to a veil that shut out the sight of something he did not wish to see. He sprang up, flying from that pregnant stillness to the vital, human presence of the other man.

"Chief—for the love of Heaven, what is it?" he cried, with a full assurance that the question would not be answered.

"What is what?" asked Hamilton quietly.

"I don't know. That is just it—unless it is what you were deciding not to tell me."

Hamilton's hands, warm and steady, fell upon his shoulders. "Brace up, boy, you are all upset to-night. Africa is on your nerves, with probably a touch of fever. Go to bed and take a couple of grains of quinine. No, there is nothing to be ashamed of: we all get these times out here; when Our Lady of Africa lays her hands on our heads they breed strange fancies in our brains."

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That was all, and the memory of it faded under the monotony of the days. Hewitt had a touch of fever, sufficient to afford a comfortable explanation, and he gladly accepted it as such.

One night while still sick he woke, as men sometimes do in those fevers, filled with a sense of unusual well-being, his mind strangely acute. The lamp was still burning and Hamilton was sitting by his cot, looking down at him through the mosquito-nettings with eyes which wore an expression of brooding pity.

"Why, Chief—what's wrong?" laughed Hewitt. "You look as if you thought I was going to die. I never felt better in my life." And Hamilton, his face lighting up as mechanically as though he had turned a switch, laughed with him and permitted a cigarette in celebration.

But Hewitt, his own vision momentarily quickened, had noted how strangely worn Hamilton had become; he seemed to have aged ten years in the last few weeks. The next day, glancing at the calendar for the first time since his illness, he saw that the launch was already ten days overdue.

III

Hamilton never spoke of the launch, Hewitt remembered afterward. The morning hopes, the mid-day surmises, the evening explanations and grumblings as day after day went by and still she did not come, were all his own. He had even a sense that Hamilton did not really hear them; it was as if his ears were insulated from Hewitt's speech on the subject; talking about the launch to Hamilton was like ringing up a non-existent number on the telephone.

They suffered no inconvenience as yet—there was still enough of everything; and then, as Hewitt laughingly said, of course she *must* arrive some time. But, in view of the diminishing supplies, he was surprised when Hamilton, on a trivial excuse, prohibited his going up-river after hippo meat for the negroes.

It came slowly, almost imperceptibly, in a piling up of seemingly detached incidents. A mysterious canoe stealing by on the hitherto deserted river; half-seen forms flitting on the edges of the Bush; the woman from without the stockade who was brought in, bleeding her life out through a wound from which protruded a fragile shaft of black wood; the strange disappearances and returns of Hamilton's servant, Atta, a half-Kru who had been with him for years.

Hewitt came upon them one afternoon near the river bank. Hamilton was standing, and Atta, his lean, chocolate-colored body clad in a scant yard of scarlet cotton cloth, crouched near him between the trunks of two palms.

Hewitt stopped short with a queer sensation of having seen it all before. The trunks of the palms, roughly scarred with the marks of the fallen leaves, the background of water and tangled vegetation, that half wistful, half questioning look in the eyes the negro turned upward to his master—it all came upon him with a feeling of recollection.

The next instant he recognized it: remembered how, as a child, he had been fascinated by the trade-mark on a certain brand of tobacco that depicted just such a scene. It had been a miserable woodcut, smudged in black and white, but it had struck into his childish imagination with a sense of utter foreignness, with an actual assurance that some day he would see something just like that and that it would somehow mean a great deal to him.

Well—this was it. The next moment Hamilton looked up, dismissed the negro, and joined him.

"It has come at last," he said quietly. "Atta has been in Bontuku and he tells me that Amory is preparing to wipe us out. He is already at Kafrudidi with his men—they will be here in three days at the most."

"What shall you do?" asked Hewitt, rigid with a youthful agony lest he betray a surprise that might be interpreted as fear.

"My orders are to hold Abossu." And Hewitt, glancing up at the frail stockade, thought grimly of Amory's four thousand warriors.

"Have they any kind of artillery?"

"No. Mostly spears and a few hundred old-fashioned flintlocks. We can hold out as long as the machine-gun ammunition lasts."

"And then, of course, the launch may come any day," said Hewitt cheerfully, but Hamilton's "The launch? Oh—yes—yes, of course," came with a curious effect of absolute blankness.

There was little they could do. The few score negroes from outside were moved within the stockade, their huts were burned

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THEN CAME A DAY WHEN THE FRINGE OF CLEARING SWARMED, AS A NEWLY DISTURBED ANT-HILL, WITH BLACK BODIES THAT ROLLED FORWARD LIKE DARK FOAM ON THE CRESTS OF THE WAVES OF SOUND FROM THE WAR-DRUMS.

and the bananas leveled. Except for the noise and stench of the now crowded compound, life went on much as before. King Amory had learned to play a waiting game, but the fringes of the Bush teemed with the sense of countless watching eyes.

With his glasses Hewitt could see them: black, flattened heads, wide-mouthed, darting snakelike behind the screen of vines and leaves. There was an occasional fusillade or a dash out into the newly sprouting banana gardens, followed by a swift retreat as the machine guns crackled their response. Futile, all of it, as attacks, but serving to keep up the strain on the little garrison.

Then came a day when the fringe of clearing swarmed, as a newly disturbed ant-hill, with black bodies that rolled forward like dark foam on the crests of the waves of sound from the war-drums. For the first time Hewitt felt the shock of a genuine conflict, sniffed the sting of powder burned in earnest, and the acid taint of angry sweat. At the end two of the Haussas were dead, leaving only eighteen for the work of defense.

But they had beaten them back and that night, on the darkened veranda, Hewitt, a trifle elated by the thought that he had borne himself well, reiterated the fact that the launch *must* come. At any moment of any day, seeming to float on the mirage of

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heat-dazzle over the brown river, she might appear round that bend, toward which he had strained his eyes for so many weeks. Probably Amory's attack had been precipitated by the news that she was already drawing near on her way up-stream.

But Hamilton, apparently unhearing, talked of home.

Not that "home" of country-houses, tennis, haycocks, meadows, and summer moons to which men usually revert. His theme was the city, and again not the city that Hewitt knew—a vaguely "jolly place" of theatres and restaurants, a huge entertainment, peopled mainly by "rotters" whom one regarded with a superior mixture of contempt and amusement. Hamilton's city was a vast peril, a combination of stomach, claws, and votes; remorselessly selfish, violently hysterical.

"That is where the real danger lies," he said, speaking in detached sentences as if only the highest points of his inner vision could rise above the waters of his habitual silence. "Compared to that our problems out here on the frontier are simple. All we have to do is to 'hold Abossu'—or Kenia—or Singapore—or any other place whence can be snatched a bag of grain, a pound of meat, a bale of cotton, to feed that insatiable appetite at home—keep them fed, keep them quiet—that is the task. And they themselves will do nothing to help—but God help us all if the pinch ever comes. . . . Do you remember the night after the victory at Pieter's Kopje? I saw the celebration—only a small part of it, only a few miles of hastily illumined streets filled with a mob of men and women, maudlin and hysterical, screaming over the victory they had never helped to win—and never would."

The war-drums growled suddenly from the Bush, and Hamilton rose, walked to the rail, and swept the moonlit stretches with his night-glass. Hewitt, filled with an uneasy sense of being offered a knowledge he could not—even would not—accept, listened for more in a queer mingling of distaste and fascination.

" . . . Millions of them," Hamilton went on, still scanning the Bush. "Pallid, flat-chested, without loyalty or devotion to anything but their own abused bodies . . . but with votes . . . God help us—votes. *Panem et Circenses*—keep them fed, keep them quiet, keep them thinking how great and good they are. . . . We are caught in the machine we have ourselves created . . . a vast Empire, cracking with its own weight, crushing the shoulders with which we try to prop it. . . . A terrific necessity. . . . You and I are pawns in the game of those who play for continents . . . and the players themselves sit betwixt the devil and the deep sea. For their every action there must be some pretext that soothes the sentiments of that dangerous mass beneath—no matter what the cost. . . . But I will at least have my price . . . "

His voice, trailing off into silence, seemed to stain the air with a tang of indescribable bitterness, and Hewitt sprang up in an alarm of something he could not understand.

"Chief—what do you mean?"

"Nothing at all. I am talking wildly," Hamilton replied as he carefully wiped the glasses and laid them down. "Go to bed now and get what sleep you can. I will wake you about twelve for your watch—the moon will be down then."

It was dark when Hewitt woke—that thick, almost palpable darkness that only Africa seems able to produce. Hewitt sprang up at Hamilton's touch and would have spoken, but the other's fingers were pressed across his lips, and he realized how extraordinarily silent was the little post.

"Dress and come to me at the river gate," Hamilton breathed in his ear and then left silently.

Groping his way, Hewitt found him waiting outside the stockade where the greasy clay sloped sharply to the water. There were others near, too; he could detect them by an occasional breath and that psychic emanation from unseen bodies in the dark.

"There is a canoe," whispered Hamilton, "a couple of men, with provisions, a rifle and some ammunition—all I could spare. You must slip out into midstream, then lie down and drift. An hour will take you out of danger. Then push on to Animaboe as fast as you can and tell them to send the launch. You can do it in six days and the launch can make it up-stream in fourteen. I can hold out for about three weeks longer if all goes well."

"Chief——"

"Hush—not so loud. Take this—" and Hewitt felt a small, flat metal case thrust into his hand. "It contains your written orders to go; button it into your hip pocket;

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it is your authority for leaving Abossu. Now—good-by."

Hewitt shook hands in a daze. He longed to stay, to throw himself at the other's feet and beg to be allowed to remain and share what might come. But, invisible though he was in the darkness, there was that about Hamilton at the moment which forbade question or protest.

Up till then he had shown himself only as a friend, but now he had suddenly become the master. Hewitt felt that probably this was the real Hamilton, the Hamilton of Kenia and Gondokoro. He did not realize, since great things are rarely recognized as such until they are past, that in future it would be Abossu that would be indissolubly linked with Hamilton's name.

A hand, a nigger's, as he felt from the cold dryness of the palm, came out of the blackness and grasped his wrist. He followed for a step or two, then looked back, but Hamilton was already swallowed up in the thick gloom. A sudden horror of that impenetrable, swallowing darkness rushed over Hewitt as he pictured the other standing somewhere in it—alone. Wrenching himself free, he ran back, his arms outstretched to seek that solitary figure; he found him by touch before he could see him, and the next instant their hands were locked together.

"Chief—Chief," whispered Hewitt brokenly. "Let me stay with you—the launch will come—don't send me away."

The hands tightened about his and he could feel the hunger in those straining muscles, but Hamilton's whisper came steadily.

"I can't risk it—you must go; it is the only chance. But I am glad you came back. You have meant much to me these months—now go—God bless you."

The hands freed his with a little push as Hamilton disappeared, and Hewitt, with a sting of pain, realized that it would be useless to seek him again. He was seized by other hands, jostled by sleek, invisible bodies, lifted on board the canoe, and the next instant the unsteady, tipping motion told him he was afloat. With it came the exhilarating thought that at last he was doing something for Hamilton.

IV

Hewitt woke one day, seeming to float up from a deep pit of oblivion to find himself in a thin, shaven, immaculate, white body that he had difficulty in recognizing as his own. He had a vague memory of having passed through some period of terrible stress; but there were cool things about his head, somebody fed him, and he slept.

So it went for a space of days; but at each awaking came a sense of something forgotten until, one morning, waking alone and drawn by a strange hum of activity outside, he crawled on hands and knees to the window and propped himself against the ledge.

He was evidently at Animaboe: he recognized the beach, piled though it was with masses of baggage, stacks of ammunition cases, and dismounted machine guns in brown canvas covers.

There were craft on the river: long, white-painted shoal-water steamers, some launches with their double tiers of cabins, boats plying to and fro. On the beach files of porters brought more burdens; he could hear the quick tread of marching men, the sound of a distant bugle, an electric hum in the air that spoke of swift, decisive action.

Something was afoot, something big, too, but Hewitt's brain refused all calls upon it and the most he could compass was an idle wonder. A couple of pink-faced, newly landed boy officers passed beneath; he wanted to call out to them, but a mixture of shyness and lassitude deterred him. Then one of them looked up, caught his eye, and spoke to his companion, whose face hardened into an expression of stony contempt; and they marched on with their arrogant young spines rigid with disapproval.

Hewitt wondered what might be the matter—perhaps something horrible had happened to his face. But he could not bother himself about it just then—he had seen something else below him that interested him more. A negro sitting propped against a palm stump, his chin on his knees, his naked body covered with half-healed scars.

This was something Hewitt could understand, something that appealed to him as being somehow in the range of his own experience. He had seen a negro squatting by a palm stump somewhere before and it had meant a great deal to him. Of course—he remembered now—it was on a tobacco package and the man's name was Atta and he was Hamilton's servant. He knew that negro. They had met long ago in a sort of Coal Age country, all water and monstrous

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plants—he knew the look in the man's eyes as he met them, a look half pain, half rebellion, wholly question—always question.

Atta, a half Kru; of course, it was at Abossu——

He turned, groping for the bed as a haven that he must reach before that flood of recollection, which he was now keeping deliberately at bay, broke over him with its dark waves.

Hamilton? And Atta was sitting out there in the dust—and the *Indomitable* was moored in the stream.

What had happened since he floated away from Abossu that night? He remembered it now. The silence, the darkness, the straining hand-clasp, the odor of the naked, black bodies about them, the lip-lap of the water round the frail canoe, the drops of thick night-dew on her rim, that squashed under his fingers like flecks of jelly.

It all came back in vivid flashes of detached scenes amidst lapses of utter forgetfulness. Hours of torment suspended between two suns, one in the sky above him, one blazing up from the waters about him. A wet, suffocating heat that drained every atom of strength, then darkness and clammy night-fogs that chilled without cooling. . .

A racked body that seemed to be slowly burning inside; an endless, hopeless race with time. A canoe-man who turned, looked at him with the surprised, reproachful stare of a hurt child, gave a grunt, and fell back across his knees, dead. He had grabbed the paddle as it floated by, thrown the body overboard, and taken the man's place. . .

A ceaseless drip of sweat, a cloud of insects that traveled always just in front of his eyes, the yellow dazzle of the river, the perpetual, changeless walls of forest. . . .

Some mangroves at last—then round a bend and there was Animaboe. And the *Indomitable*, apparently in good repair, lying at her moorings with cold engines. . .

A lapse again. The next thing he remembered was lying on a bed with some white men about him. They were bathing him, binding up the chafed sores on his legs, the running sun-blisters on back and arms, handling him with the tenderness of men who themselves face just such vicissitudes. He was telling them his story, gasping it out in feeble sentences, begging them to send the launch—and there was a queer change in their faces that seemed to grow hard in a conflict between sympathy and doubt. There was one of them he had seen before, a little, bald man with queer, lashless eyes. He thought that must be the one who had asked him that strange question. It was funny that he couldn't remember it, seeing how angry it had made him at the time.

Ah—he had it now.

"And you left Hamilton *alone* up there?"

That was it—"And you left Hamilton *alone* up there?" It was funny that they couldn't seem to understand; he remembered shouting at them to look in his trousers and they would find his orders buttoned safely into the hip pocket.

Then he was alone. He could hear them talking in another room, a low-toned growl of conversation, broken suddenly by a high-pitched: "I looked through his clothes—you saw me do it, and I couldn't find anything."

The telegraph was working, too; he could hear it ticking away incessantly and knew that his story was being told by those same clicks in the Castle at Accrome, a hundred miles away. Perhaps it was even now being flashed under the ocean to a vague place called "Home"—and back in his brain arose a confused vision of a smoky sky, of gray, arrogant towers above crowded streets, of men with faces of blank authority sitting between two invisible monstrosities that somebody had told him were the devil and the deep sea.

It was all very confusing; he would have liked to give it all up and rest, but the hours were passing and there was nothing done.

And—good God!—what might not be happening at Abossu at that very moment? He had raised himself and shouted in desperation and the men came back to him, but all they seemed able to say was "No orders from Accrome."

It had got inside his head, that sentence. "No orders—no orders," whirling round until it burst in a shower of sparks that drove him mad with pain. He had flung himself bodily at that strange wall of doubt and indifference all about him; there had been a couple of minutes of actual physical struggle, then his brief flash of strength had faded and he fell.

They caught him, but it was only his body that they held; he had left it behind in their hands while he himself had gone on falling, endlessly, into that black oblivion from which he had so lately arisen. That was all; how long ago that was, what had happened since then, he did not know.

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ON THE BEACH FILES OF PORTERS BROUGHT MORE BURDENS; HE COULD HEAR THE QUICK TREAD OF MARCHING MEN, THE SOUND OF A DISTANT BUGLE, AN ELECTRIC HUM IN THE AIR THAT SPOKE OF SWIFT, DECISIVE ACTION.

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For some time, as he lay there in that torment of remembrance, he had been aware that somebody was standing by him, and at last he looked up. It was a little, bald man with black, peering eyes. He remembered him now—a judge of some sort; he had seen him one night in Accrome; he had said a lot of queer things—he had been drunk.

But the judge was sober now and in his gaze there was something that caused Hewitt instinctively to gather such strength as he could in preparation for a conflict of some kind.

It was the look of a man who had a task to perform and meant to seize every advantage of the other's weakness. It brought back to Hewitt the look cast upon him by the two young officers who had passed beneath the window; but there was a difference, a sense of a greater knowledge, of an authority behind it.

There was no greeting as the judge plunged raspingly into the midst of things.

"Hamilton is killed."

"I know," and Hewitt was surprised at the steadiness of his own tones. "When did it happen?"

"About three weeks after you—" the judge paused, then added, with deliberate intent—"escaped."

So that was it; he had "escaped." But it did not seem to matter; Hamilton was dead and nothing seemed to matter now. All he cared about was to know.

"Why was not the launch sent on time?"

"She had an accident and was laid up for repairs. There seemed no reason for anxiety; Hamilton had plenty of supplies and if he needed help he could have sent a messenger."

"He did send a messenger—he sent me."

The judge peered at him with blinking, menacing eyes. "Ah—something fishy about that. Dangerous post—young, untried chap comes scurrying down river all alone—no orders."

"I brought written orders from Hamilton."

"So you said, but I searched your clothes myself. Now look here, my boy—" and Hewitt knew that the crucial moment of the interview was at hand. "I am speaking by orders—never mind from whom, just take it from me that my words are inspired. Take my tip. Keep quiet and you will get the benefit of the doubt—we can whitewash you nicely. But—if you get to talking——"

Hewitt was suddenly tired of it all and he sat there on the edge of the cot staring at his bare feet. How white they were! He felt a curious desire to touch them to see if they were as cold as they looked. But he must keep quiet and not talk. Why mustn't he talk? He had a vague realization that he was being offered terms; that he was somehow projected into the very midst of one of those mysterious affairs of which one heard it whispered that they had been "hushed up." He was being hushed up. Don't talk—or——

That was it, that unspoken "or." He saw the abyss that was opening beneath those miraculously white feet of his. He had heard stories of that "or." A word from headquarters and down he would go into a bottomless pit of ostracism, of skulking in Oriental ports, slinking up byways at the sight of a white face lest it should be one that had the knowledge of his story behind it.

Perhaps a native woman—certainly drink. And his mother——

He felt no resentment for the man at his side. What was it somebody had said? "Pawns in the game of those who play with continents." The other man was as much caught in the machine as himself, as liable to be ground if he impeded its remorseless cogs.

The sound of a bugle reminded him there were still things he must know. "And—all that?" he asked, with a nod at the window.

"Punitive expedition. Poor Hamilton's death roused the whole country, great wave of popular sentiment—literally forced the hand of the Government, made France give way. Troops land next week, then we go up, smash Amory, and take Bontuku—it will be red on the map next year."

Hewitt's hold on himself was loosening and he felt that he was being tossed on a sea of suddenly remembered sentences that beat up about him in myriad sharp points of light.

"A terrific necessity—" and then, insistent, bringing with it a taint of the sickly fumes of warm, cheap wine—"Ham'lton sees too much——"

That knowledge he had so often felt crouching in Hamilton's atmosphere seemed to spring into his own brain. At last he saw what Hamilton had seen; he saw, too, that Hamilton had seen it all the time.

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CEIBA TREES—TYPICAL OF THE LANDSCAPE ALONG THE MAGDALENA.

The ROAD to BOGOTA

by

ARTHUR RUHL

AUTHOR OF "THE OTHER AMERICANS," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

ON THE steamer north from the Isthmus was a nice old Peruvian gentleman taking his daughters to Europe to be "finished." Leaning on the rail one tepid evening, as our big white fruiter rolled lazily up the meridian, we watched the North Star swing back and forth across the bow—up is below the horizon in this part of the world—and began talking of nations in the aggregate, as total strangers so amiably do, at sea in pleasant weather.

"When you Americans start a city," he said, "you build a railroad, a station, a hotel across from the station, and your city is started. Our ancestors went off as far

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A RIVER BOAT OF THE "INTERMEDIATE" TYPE ON THE LOWER MAGDALENA.

as they could and built a church. Then they built a city around the church."

In that little generalization are suggested many of the differences between our Spanish-American neighbors and ourselves, and perhaps an explanation of such buried cities as Bogotá. The ancient capital of Colombia—nearly four hundred years old now—is nine thousand feet up in the air and harder to get at than any other capital in South America. If you are an explorer with months of time and don't mind living on quinine, you can get there by boat and mule from the head-waters of the Orinoco and Amazon. Or you may come in from the Pacific side across three ranges of mountains which an observant young Colombian once described as a vast comb, each tooth of which the traveler on his patient mule —"the Balloon of the Andes"—follows from root to point ere he reaches the capital.

The main highway to Bogotá, however, the one up and down which priests and poets and fighting men, pianos and Paris dresses, and gold-hunters and diplomats, have been traveling all these years, is in from the Caribbean by the River Magdalena. Stern-wheelers go chunking up this yellow stream for six hundred miles from Barranquilla to Honda, and then you can cut across the mountains to Bogotá in three days, by mule, or, by ascending to Giradot, reach the capital in about the same time by a combination of boat and train.

If the Magdalena is full of water and you catch an express-boat, it is possible to reach Bogotá from the coast in eight days. It took me seventeen, and the wife of the American minister, who started up river a few weeks ahead of me, before the rains, and spent many contemplative hours on sand-bars, was out a month. In short, it is no place for the restless tourist. You go because you must, or as Colonel Younghusband went to Lhasa, for to admire and for to see.

There are several ways of getting to Barranquilla from New York. There are the big white "fruiters" which have grown up with the banana trade; German boats; and those detached but unalterable sections of the British Isles, the Royal Mail steamers, with their roasts and cold cuts, Yorkshire brawn, Stilton cheese, and Melton Mowbray pie, and their cockney stewards who say "Thank you?" with an upward inflection when you order anything, and if you say "No, thank you!—" say "Thank you?" just the same.

You touch at some of the islands, at Colon and Cartagena; the cold Atlantic warms and turns from gray-green to blue, the air to liquid velvet, and the feeling that you must get up very early to-morrow morning and make a million, fades gradually and deplorably away. By the time the

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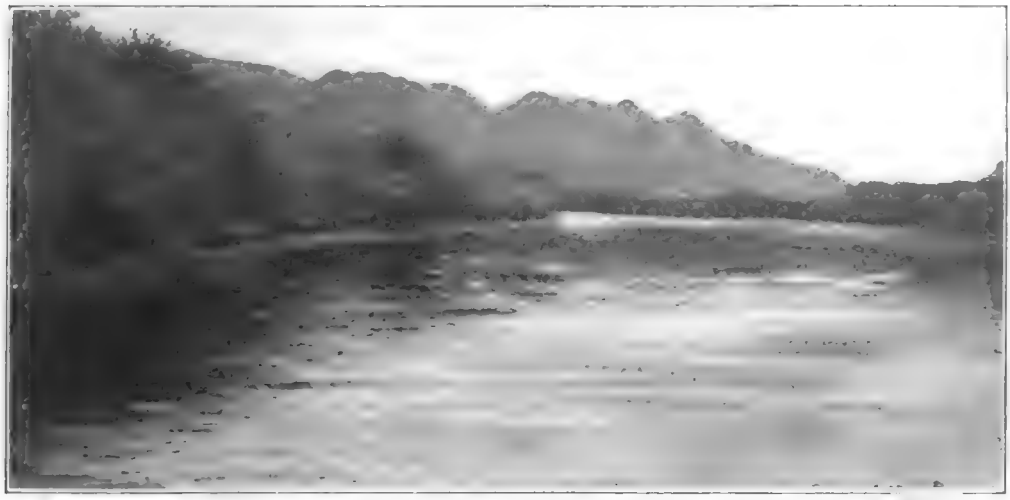

ON THE UPPER MAGDALENA, WITH THE FOOTHILLS OF THE ANDES BEGINNING TO SHOW.

rickety little victoria deposits you at Mrs. Meek's hotel in Barranquilla—Mrs. Meek is, herself, another detached and unalterable bit of the British Isles—you can droop your wrists over the arms of a wicker chair almost as gracefully as a born Colombian and talk for minutes at a stretch about life, emerald mines, spheres of influence, man-eating sharks, or almost anything.

Even Barranquilla seems tolerable. It is hot there, and the sand blown back and forth through its blazing streets displeases the stranger, but the natives promptly assure him that sand is the very thing they're proud of. It covers the cobblestones inches deep, absorbs, according to local belief, all the dry-season germs, and then the rains come along, scour it away, and wash new sand down from the hills again. One reclines very comfortably in Mrs. Meek's cool patio, at any rate, and eats fresh little lobsters, just caught in the Caribbean that morning, and musky-sweet *papayas;* drinks black Colombian coffee; watches Mrs. Meek's pet white heron and the toucan with its absurd beak, as they stroll solemnly round; and, if one is lucky, catches an express-steamer, up-river, that same afternoon.

If there is none it pays to wait, but of course the stranger can not be convinced of that and will doubtless insist, as did we, on taking the first he can get. These steamers are like our old Mississippi river-boats and they vary from the express boats, which are comfortable and fast, to little freighters, scarcely more than tubs. Ours was an "intermediate," which meant a passenger-boat likely to stop anywhere, at any time, for anything from a few cords of wood to a demijohn of rum.

The captain on these boats does nothing apparently but sign papers, bargain for firewood, and sleep in a hammock up aloft. The real navigator is a coppery old river-dog, who never comes out of the pilot-house, and by memory, ripples, the color of the water, and other magic, keeps his craft in the treacherous channel. He is appropriately called the "*practico.*" The crew are negroes or mixed-breeds, who, by dint of carrying cargo and wood all day and part of the night, acquire torsos, wild envy of which partially keeps awake the indolent passenger looking down from the shade of the upper deck.

This deck has six or eight staterooms on either side and a long dining-table in the middle. There are a canvas cot and wash-stand in each room, a wavy mirror and a few hooks. Blankets or mattresses are out of the question in the continual Turkish bath of the *tierra caliente*, and the passenger brings his own pillow, sheets, and mosquito-net. Only about half the passengers have staterooms. The rest are at home where their trunks are—littering the deck forward, generally—and by ten o'clock at

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LANDING AT ONE OF THE RIVER TOWNS.

night are peacefully sleeping on cots the steamer provides.

Attended by a band of half-breed boys, not unlike the youthful banditti who grab one's hat in a New York restaurant, here the travelers invite their souls—with the breeze that rarely fails to be stirred by the progress of the steamer, the slowly unrolling belt of tropical jungle, broken by thatched-roof villages, and alligators sleeping on the sand, with open jaws like huge toy banks.

Nearly everybody who goes to Bogotá goes up this flowing road—as my friend Casper Whitney called the Orinoco, another great river of these parts. There is no way to go more quickly, nor, luckily, to be more exclusive—unless one charter a steamer—for there is nothing to be exclusive in. The man across the table may be—as he was at various times on my boat—a French promoter out to make a loan of a million francs; or a negro boy from the coast in his best black suit, going up to Bogotá to learn to be a soldier; or a Spanish actor, a Wyoming cattleman, or a French strong man with a music-hall wife and a pair of dumb-bells weighing two hundred and fifty pounds.

Together you share the heat and verdure smells and the thunder that bursts like a bomb when it rains; the excitements of each new landing and the unfathomable delays; the rice, fried plantains, *yuca*, hot soup, and stewed beef; the coffee and really good bread and chocolate which the chief bandit and his grimy assistants

A STOP IN THE SLOW RIVER JOURNEY.

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relentlessly serve three times a day.

On such a craft, in an April sun-down, with a prodigious whistling and jingling of bells, we backed away from the Barranquilla wharf and crept out into the great river. It was more than a mile wide, coffee-colored, with turf and occasional trees swirling seaward, and as we turned against the current a cool, damp breath, smelling of earth and vegetation, came out of the south, suggesting far-off interior jungles where the rains had already begun.

Almost at once, darkness, which falls quickly in the tropics after six o'clock, closed in, a dinner-bell was rung, and in the light of two smoky overhead lamps we sat down at the long table and looked each other over. Most of the company showed the mixed blood so common in this part of the world, and this background made all the more regal and impressive the young white lady who sat at the head of the

GETTING A PIANO ASHORE, BY HAND.

A NATIVE RAFT.

table, her plump fingers glittering with diamonds. She was a bride, returning with her husband from a honeymoon in Paris and Egypt to their native Medellin. It had been, one suspected, her first sight of the great world outside her father's house, and it was still all a little strange. Leaning on the table, gripping her knife and fork with rather unnecessary firmness, she looked from left to right with a wide-eyed restlessness which never quite left her until ten days later, at Puerto Barrio, she saw a face on the wharf, shrieked "*Mamá!*

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Mamá!" and nearly jumped over the rail.

Her husband, a rather mature bridegroom, sat at her right, and at her left—and doubtless a partial cause for her diffidence—a debonair Frenchman who, so everybody whispered, was "a *millonario!*" The obvious proof of this was that he drank bottled water brought along with him—the rest of us contented ourselves with the native Magdalena, filtered through a stone, which one of the cabin-boys scrubbed now and then with an unspeakable brush; that a boy went ashore whenever we touched a village to forage chickens for him; and that he was attended by a secretary, who had to wear a thick coat and high collar no matter how hot it was and, when he could find nothing else to do, dash off into the jungle to send a cablegram.

The Frenchman was a well-built, handsome fellow, with just such blue eyes and long blond mustaches as some of his battle-ax ancestors might have had, and the amiable, rather pretty ways that go with the soft Parisian life he had left behind. About him, in our crude little ship, moved the air of restaurants and motor-cars and boulevards ablaze with lights. For the first day or two he read Flaubert religiously, but even "Salammbô" then proved too difficult, and the rest of the way—with a soft shirt turned in at the neck enough to show a slender gold necklace and cross, and rapidly waving a little fan close to his face like a comic-opera Mikado—he made a three-cornered party with the pair from Medellin.

CERTIFIED PROPRIETY

Next to the Frenchman sat his secretary, and next to the secretary two Colombian *señoritas* of the middle class, traveling alone. One of them, as we later found, was the hard-headed proprietress of a little shop at La Dorada, and the other her neighbor, and their decorum could scarcely have been excelled by Cæsar's wife. Nevertheless, girls are not accustomed to travel unchaperoned in Spanish America, and in the monotony of the slow chunk-chunk up-stream they inevitably became the subject of gossip and the more or less dashing attentions of various gentlemen, including the young captain.

On the last day out he asked me to sign a typewritten paper stating that all the staterooms had been occupied by ladies and gentlemen, and that the captain himself had behaved in a thoroughly moral manner and left nothing undone to conserve the propriety of his ship. As some one had broken into my trunk and stolen my money—a very rare occurrence, it is only fair to say—I was disinclined to confer this last bouquet, but finally did so, asking if it were the custom for passengers to sign such documents at the end of the trip. The captain assured me it was not—it was all on account of that Frenchman. The latter's restlessness had been apparent, as the boat seemed to tie up earlier and earlier each night and get away later each morning, and he had at last announced that he would complain to the company that the captain was delaying the trip in order to see more of the young ladies of La Dorada!

Across from me was a young Colombian returning to Bogotá, after working at photography in New York, to try to bring his father and mother to America. He was reading Schopenhauer in English, could answer most of those questions, involving an acquaintance with popular science, which arise on such a trip, and was untiring in his enthusiasm for his adopted country. He was, indeed, much more like an Americanized European, fond of contrasting the bustle of his new environment with the old country, than the more common type of courteous but impractical Spanish American, and whenever the dinner-bell rang he would jump up, beaming from ear to ear, shout "Now for the big eats!" and, half at the phrase itself, half at his own acquaintance with American slang, roar with delight.

With these and a score or so more, changing as we touched at little river towns, the *Clara* chunk-chunked up-stream for nearly two weeks. Once, that first night, we stopped for wood and once to run a gang-plank ashore, and solemnly, in a flare of torches, fill two kegs with rum—then, with sparks pouring from the stacks, push back again into the velvet dark. After the first night, on account of the difficulties of the shifting channel, we tied up shortly after sundown and waited until dawn.

Barranquilla is eleven degrees north of the equator, and Giradot, where the railroad begins, a trifle more than four. The Magdalena, navigable for nine hundred miles, rises about two degrees south of Giradot and flows northward between the

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central and eastern ranges of the Andes. The upper river journey is through foothills, with snow-capped Tolima sometimes in sight; the lower, below the junction with the Cauca, through comparatively flat, savanna-like country, which slowly unrolls, a monotonous belt of yellow bank, caving in now and then like brown sugar in the high water, and surmounted by palms and jungle growth, and here and there the smooth, monument-like trunks and umbrella heads of great *ceiba* trees.

Some of these lower-river stretches, where the land near the bank had been cleared and cultivated and only the bigger trees left standing, were like a park. One could imagine bungalows and soft, oiled roads—a sort of Southern California, but moister and more fertile. This was especially true in that delicious hour at the end of the afternoon when the east bank lay gilded and glorified in the blaze of the setting sun. The tawny river, thick with silt, sweeping by; the level clearing reaching back to the forest, against whose opaque green strange whitish tree-trunks curved languidly upward; contented golden-brown people poling near shore or sitting in front of their thatched huts—one had the feeling of entering a primeval paradise.

Close to the bank, beside a thatched house, a vast mango-tree would spread its glossy dark-green shade, the golden fruit shining in the setting sun. And against this trunk, her head thrown back, bare arms hanging straight at her sides, would sit a golden-brown woman in a single slip, nursing a naked baby perhaps, or merely sitting there, inert and peaceful as the tree. Below, by the water, her husband might be hewing away at a dugout, or lifting out fish or plantains from his canoe.

Bongos—big gondola-like dugouts carrying a whole family—swept swiftly down-stream, and, as the steamer's wake rolled near, turned tail and, if there was time, hurried into the shelter of an inlet, for they go over like a shot. Sometimes they were working up-stream, two men, generally, stripped to the waist, walking toward the stern as they poled upward. They were beautifully built, these lithe brown fellows, with astonishing back muscles that the ordinary man doesn't show, stretching taut from shoulder to waist. There were flocks of ducks and herons, fish jumping, cattle everywhere. The sun had released its weight, a mellow golden atmosphere suffused earth and people, the whole world seemed breathed over by a nature opulent, drowsy, and kind.

There are all sorts of wild animals in Colombia, and terrifying diseases. There are pythons twenty feet long—the pillars of the natural-history museum in Bogotá are covered with their skins, wound round and round like bands of paint on a barber's pole, from floor to ceiling, one to each pillar. There are panthers and boars, and districts where a white man can scarcely go without catching some sort of fever. But on the Magdalena steamers you might almost, so far as diseases or animals are concerned, be on a flower-bordered path in Central Park.

NO TROPICAL TERRORS

We saw many herons and ducks, and frequently macaws—*guacamayos*—flying along in pairs, as is their companionable custom. Just before reaching La Dorada, there was a tree full of golden-brown monkeys, and the same afternoon we passed a big snake, dead, in the water, flopping against the shore in the wash from the boat. Together with three little snakes about as big as garter snakes at home, which we passed coming down, mule-back, by the Honda trail—and, of course, crocodiles—these were the only noticeable wild animals I met in a thousand miles of river and mountain travel in Colombia. And although one might, perhaps, have been eaten up by mosquitoes inside the wall of vegetation, there was only one night on the boat that I hung my net, and even then I scarcely needed it.

Alligators were always appearing, to rouse and pleasantly focus the all but inanimate mind. "*Caimanes!*" some one would cry, and everybody obediently repaired to that side of the boat and clapped and whistled until the big grayish logs awoke and scrambled off into the water.

One we passed floating down-stream devouring one of his dead and decayed companions, while a guard of vultures flapped drowsily overhead or looked on enviously from the neighboring tree-tops. Seventeen was the most we saw at one time going up-stream, but one afternoon, coming down, there were forty, strung along the bank, or just showing their eyes and noses above the water. Awakened by the sight of all these potential pocket-books going to

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waste, the thrifty stranger is just beginning to dream of becoming an alligator-king, when he is informed that the man who had the monopoly of the Magdalena alligators dropped the concession because—on account of changing fashions or the cost of getting hides to market—it didn't pay.

The only other regular excitement was the stops for wood. The steamers devour an enormous amount, and there are stops several times a day. Every few miles is a clearing with its woodpiles neatly divided by upright poles into sections about five feet high and a foot wide—just enough for one of the negro roustabouts to arch over his fine shoulders. The steamer whistles, the woodsman appears, daylight or dark, the captain goes ashore and makes his bargain, and the crew, bare to the waist, get to work.

It is a sight that fills with envy the first-class passengers stewing away for lack of exercise on the upper deck. One man loads, another carries. The latter throws a gunny-sack over his forehead and spreads it along one arm. On this the other man builds up an incredible pile, over the top of which, with his free hand, the wood-carrier swings a short rope, neatly catching the end in the hand holding the wood. With this hold he will come down twenty feet of almost perpendicular bank and across a wobbly gang-plank without a quiver. The sight is especially pretty at night, with torches flaring on the lithe brown bodies—slender hips, taut diaphragms, beautifully built shoulders and backs—the men singing and joking, the woodsman's family lined up in silent absorption, and behind, the velvety forest, black, moist, and impenetrable.

Although more than twice as large as France, Colombia has only about five million people, and between Barranquilla and Honda there is nothing that really could be called a city. Even Calamar, which is connected with Cartagena by railroad; Magangue; and Puerto Barrio—whence a railroad runs across to the city of Medellin—are scarcely more than shabby towns, with a stucco church or two, a few shops, and a thousand or so people.

Every few hours, however, the steamer ties up at a little thatched village, where you can stretch your legs ashore and forage for fruit. The steward's depressing lack of interest in anything but fried plantains—a coarse banana—or the beef which is roped in its animate shape, pulled into the water, and hauled aboard by the horns, soon makes such hunting the most exciting and practical of diversions. There are mangoes—the streets of every town in the *tierra caliente* are strewn with their big seeds—and humans, horses, and cows, too, when they can, are forever sucking them; sweet little *nisperos*, like Irish potatoes on the outside and soft and wet within; and the *papaya*, which looks and tastes something like an osage muskmelon and grows on a slender tree.

And there are nearly always villainous little black cigars, delicious doubtless to a sweating *cargador* who has carried a ton or two of firewood, drunk and worked off a gallon or so of muddy river-water, and eaten several pans of rice, boiled beef, and plantains, but a trifle forbidding to the more effete.

Still, the magic which inheres in anything taken from its native soil is as potent as ever here, and one soon finds oneself puffing amiably away on damp black weeds bought from wrinkled old brown women squatting in the street, and becoming as excited as each bend in the river opens up new horizons as if each cluster of huts hid buried treasure.

The shock-haired cabin-boy commissioned to pluck the market's brightest gems for our Frenchman was specially gifted at this bargaining. The elaborate Spanish idiom always gives such interviews a droll formality, to which he added the worldly air of one to whom Barranquilla and Ambalema, and great steamers going down to the sea, were all part of the day's work.

Loitering into the open doorway of the usual home of two rooms, the main one of which generally has a cleanly swept dirt floor, a hammock, a few chairs, and a sewing-machine worked by hand, he would pick up a hen—the docility of domestic animals in the tropics is often astonishing—and begin to bargain with the *señora*. This involved a great deal of irrelevant repartee, into which the question of price only at intervals intruded.

"Does she lay many eggs?" I heard him ask once.

"Ah, *señor!*"—and the lady of the house held up a deprecating hand—"she is a *señorita!*"

As the word *gallina* is used in the same colloquial sense in which its English equivalent, "chicken," has lately been used on

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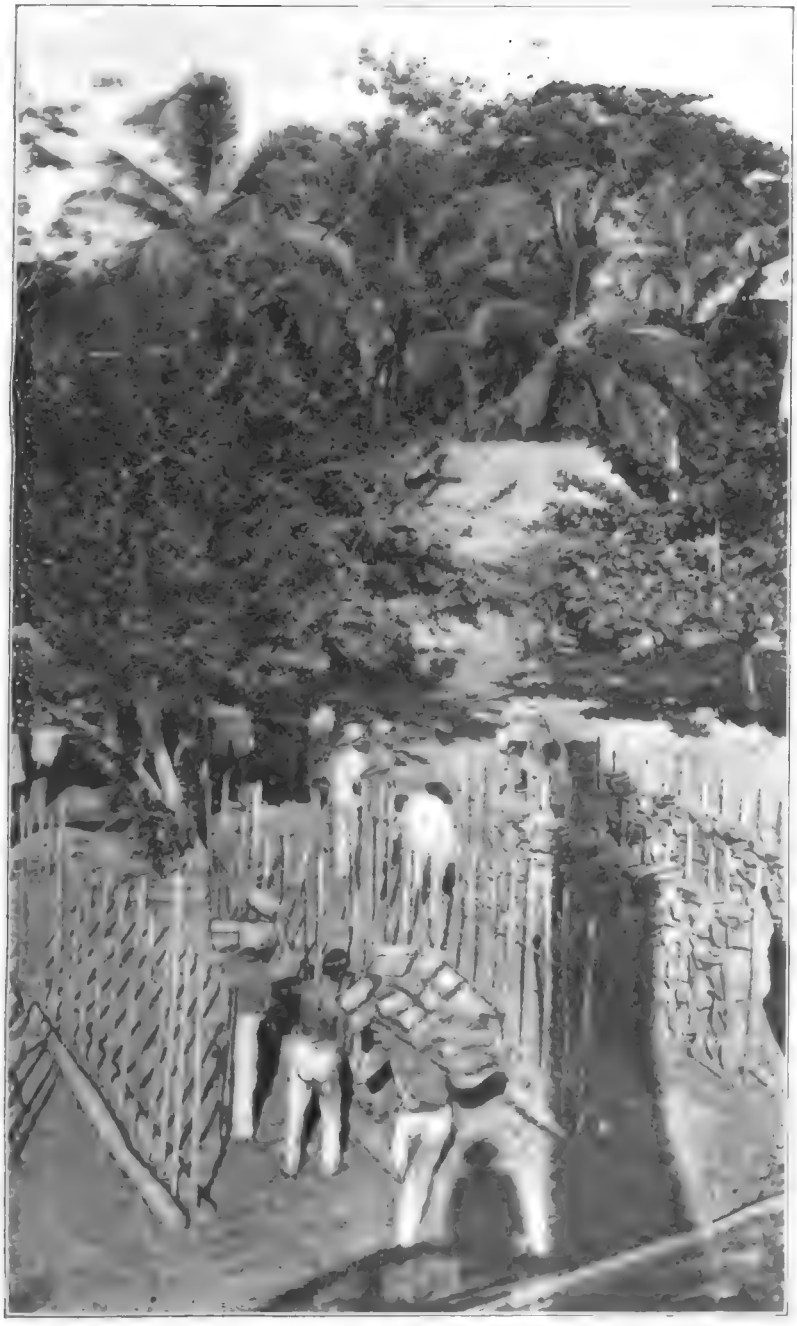

ONE OF THE WOOD-PILES FROM WHICH STEAMERS ARE REPLENISHED. THE POLES MAKE DIVISIONS, EACH OF WHICH IS A MAN'S LOAD.

Broadway, there were opportunities for plays on words involving the soft-eyed daughter indolently draped against the opposite doorway, which this dashing young man was not likely to miss. It often took several of these interviews for him to get his price, and he might have tried several villages before he came aboard, dangling his meek *gallina* by the tips of her wings.

It was these visits at night to dimly-lit, half-inanimate villages, rather than the brazen, burning middays, which seemed

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to take one into the heart of the tropical world. The sun set and the dusk thickened quickly into dark. Into this soft, clinging, impenetrable blackness the steamboat chunked, sparks pouring from the stacks, until presently out of the forest appeared a few faint lights. Up to these we swam, the cables were hauled ashore, and we tied up for the night.

The warmth and silence clung about and immersed one like a fog, like the breath of nature, warm, animal-like, hovering. The human world seemed hushed and breathless, toned down, slowed, made dusky, languid, and inanimate. Even the little lamps in the houses burned as if faint. The town behind the fringe of houses on the shore was invisible until one pushed into it. Each house was a little cave, a dim light visible through the open door, a man sprawled in a hammock, and no sound but the curiously exotic whir of a sewing-machine. One asked the woman running it, or sitting silent and motionless in the doorway, if she had any *papayas* or mangoes.

"*Si . . . hai . . .*" she murmured — "Yes, there are some—" in that patient, impersonal tone one often hears in the hot country, but made no move to get them.

One picked one's way back to the boat in the flare of the wood-carriers' torches, filing steadily up and down the bank. On a table under a tree, beside a smoking lamp, a woman rolled slim little cigars, her slip of a fuzzy-haired daughter solemnly clipping off the ends with a big knife. Her own neighbors, drifting by, would pick off two or three of these damp weeds, drop a tattered piece of paper money, and drift on again. And there is something so attractive about reduction of commerce to its simplest form that you, waiting for her to roll them, must needs buy a handful and light up too.

Absent-mindedly, as if taking up a conversation already begun, you find yourself talking with one of the imperturbable lookers-on. What is the population of his town? you ask. And with that inimitable phrase, which means nothing and answers everything, he murmurs "*Es regular.*" In the black water near shore, fish—many are sent down river, he says, in Holy Week—keep splashing with a curious *ka-chug!* One gets the picturesque notion that the water is full of alligators, gobbling them. Are they *caimanes*, making that noise? you ask. "Perhaps . . ." he murmurs; "who knows . . .?"

UP TO BOGOTÁ BY THE OLD SPANISH-BUILT ROAD —AN EIGHT-THOUSAND-FOOT CLIMB.

The lightning, flickering steadily behind the forest, grows sharper. There is a quick rush of cold air, and suddenly the rain comes. In a minute everything is changed. The palm-trees bend like whips, the village is blotted out behind sheets, walls, indeed, of water. The lightning flashes so frequently and so close that you fancy you can feel the heat of it on your face; and the thunder explodes not in the long roll of our northern storms, but in a sudden burst, like the explosion of a bomb. The people on the shore disappear like birds.

In a half-hour or so the rain goes as quickly

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as it came. The lightning flickers away beyond the other side of the river, and again there is the enveloping silence, broken only by the steady roll of countless tree-toads, or crickets, like the distant roar of a train.

The main river journey ends at La Dorada, and passengers take a short arm of railroad there, to Honda—whence mule-trains cut across the mountains to Facatativá, where another railroad runs across the plateau to the capital—or on through Honda to Beltran, where upper-river steamers take one to Giradot, whence another arm of railroad climbs up to Facatativá. People generally go by way of Giradot, on account of the supposed convenience of having one's baggage carried by boat or train. But as it must be shifted and reweighed several times, and as the upper river boats pay no attention, apparently, to the lower-river boats, and the trains from Giradot no attention to either, the convenience, and especially the speed, are by no means sure.

CATTLE ARE ROPED, DRAGGED INTO THE WATER, AND HAULED ABOARD BY THE HORNS

In our case, two express-steamers, one of which had left Barranquilla a week later than we, came splashing into La Dorada a few hours after us. Nearly all the passengers were going to Bogotá, yet no steamer was waiting in the upper river, and when we reached Giradot, after two nights' delay at Honda, we had to wait two days more for the up-train. I came down in two and a half days, by the Honda trail—a wonderful ride over the mountains—and most men at least, with little baggage and used to exercise, would probably prefer the old-fashioned route.

The two express-boats added several more specimens to our *jardin zoológico*, as somebody called it that night as we lay under our mosquito-nets in the hotel at Honda—six cots in the room, more in the patio, and snores in several languages shattering the still moonlight.

There was a tall, pale, politely austere young Englishman, with long upper teeth and a pith helmet, who had evidently stepped out of some French or German cartoon, although he said he came from London; and another of the brisk "city" type, whose Castilian lisp stood out among the sibilant "c's" and "z's" about us. He had learned Spanish as a commercial traveler in Spain. There were a German and his wife and pretty daughter — the father had business interests in Bogotá—and, trailing them closely, two noisy, pink-cheeked young Teutons in outlandish, ill-fitting khaki, bound for some fever-soaked plantation in the Amazon headwaters. "Nobody ever comes back from there," explained one of the Britons cheerfully. "You'll never see *them* again!"

Another Englishman, with a hawk-like face, vivid and mysterious eyes, deep-set under thick black brows, and close-cropped iron-gray hair—a man with a story, one would say—had hunted the tropical jungles for everything from orchids to thirty-foot snakes for European zoos; still another, a red-faced, garrulous, oldish wanderer, who had been seeking the golden fleece for years in Colombia, thought that perhaps now he had found it at the bottom of an Andean

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lake, which an English company was draining in order to get the gold ornaments that the Indians are supposed to have thrown into it during generations of religious festivals before the Spaniards came.

Then there was a vast, muscle-bound French "strong-man"—another figure from *Rire* or *Jugend*—just over from the Amazon, by way of Caracas, with a wife and a pair of giant dumb-bells and many queer, much-traveled boxes, including those containing the red wine he drank with his meals. The Amazon and Caribbean towns might seem the last place in the world for a Brobdingnag like this, yet he did not seem to mind indifferent food, hard travel, and the melting tropics.

Showing in theatres he hated—you had to spend half your time watching the box-office to see they didn't steal your money. What he liked better was a bull-ring, where you could show to ten thousand people, the way he did in Mexico City once, clean up five thousand at a clip, and then go off and read the papers for a week. He lifted a three-hundred-pound dumb-bell in one hand, had stones broken on his chest and an automobile driven over him. When he appeared in Bogotá a few days later the bright young man chosen to swing the sledge landed on the strong man himself, who promptly proved his right to his title by jumping up with a terrible roar and chasing the trembling youth out of the ring.

All of us, three steamer loads—after a short ride behind a wood-burning locomotive, which rested on the grades until it gathered steam—were dumped into Honda in the late afternoon. Here we found solid walls and steep, cobbled streets, more like the Old World than like the ramshackle little towns down-river; a comfortable hotel of the meandering, one-story type, with dining-tables in the open patio; and we enjoyed the almost forgotten excitement of ordering iced drinks and things that come in tins and boxes from abroad.

Honda is one of those places where people are always on their way to somewhere else. Here, as at Giradot, the up and down streams of pilgrims meet—the delicate young legation secretary just out from London or Vienna, anxious about mules and fevers and water, and whether you can really play polo at nine thousand feet, and the sun-baked adventurer outward bound from the interior, with tales of tigers and snakes and emeralds and gold. And you all sit in front of the hotel in the cool of the evening, and buy drinks and queer little papers with no news, and tell Flores, the mule-man, for the twentieth time, that you have decided to go up by train, and toss a penny to the ragged little girl with the irresistible smile, who, putting the diminutive "*ito*" on all the words she can, whisperingly begs the "little gentleman give her a little *limosnita* to buy a little breakfast for her little mother."

The tables are under arbors in the patio or the balcony that runs around it, and chickens, ducks, and turkeys stroll across the cobblestones, and an occasional peacock spreads his plumage and screams from the patio wall. Sometimes there are men-servants, but more often *mestizo* girls with names like Innocencia, Angelica, Transfiguration, Natividad, and the like. They have soft voices and soft ways, wear the sandals of the "*descalzos*" or "bootless" class, and turn a corner not by walking around it but by heading straight at it in an indolent, seal-like way, and then simply flowing or swimming around it like a fish.

Our landlady at Honda was a woman of Spanish countenance and great dignity, who swept about in a clean Mother Hubbard, reading a novel or keeping the place in it with one finger while she disposed of such irrelevant matters as one's bill. She had two little round-faced maids, Veronica and Segunda, who evidently regarded the task of looking out for the *señores pasajeros* as an unalloyed privilege and delight.

They pattered about the stone wall of the patio, like ponies proud of their harness, smiling impersonally at everybody and evidently concentrating for all they were worth on the work in hand. They were particularly concerned lest the different plates of the table d'hôte go to the wrong persons or some one venture to take a dish out of its order. *This* was for the dark gentleman, *that* for the thin one, and though you might beg to skip from omelet to *dulce* and avoid the meat which the hottest of hot-country inns insist on giving you, Veronica knew very well what was best, and only answered "*Todavia no!* Not yet!"

They took care of the dinner and later of somebody's baby, and after we were

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A STREET IN BOGOTÁ.

MRS. MEEK'S TOUCAN.

stretched under our six mosquito-nets, and the two Spanish actors had concluded their vivid anti-slumber confidences on the relative possibilities of amusement in Naples, Ostend, and Buenos Aires, and moonlight and the heavy perfume of the jasmine flowers were pouring through the barred window, and some one strumming a *tiple* in the distance as he ambled down the street, Veronica pattered in, with an uplifted finger methodically counted the sheeted figures, and then, with an air of great satisfaction, disappeared for the night.

There were only about half a dozen staterooms on the Giradot boat, and at least ten times that many passengers, so that during our one night on the upper river the whole deck was packed with cots. A few of us, less terrified of "night-air" than the rest, spread our beds in the open by the pilot-house, where we soaked up dew with great success until the four-o'clock rain came down—the only time on the river, or coming down the Honda trail, that the rainy season gave me any inconvenience. It rained every twenty-four hours, but almost always at night, and the days were generally as bright and clear as one could wish.

This part of the Magdalena winds through a mountainous country suggesting parts of Idaho and Montana. The current was so swift that at times our little boat stood still for ten minutes at a time, panting for dear life, sparks pouring from her stacks, without advancing an inch. It was water to go down stream on, and a procession of *balsas*—rafts made of a light, spongy wood with a sort of rush hood on top—loaded with various sorts of produce continually sailed past. Whole families swept gaily by on these simple craft, which are abandoned at the end of the journey, to see new sights, sell their wares, and pole home or work their way back on a steamer. Such a river is, indeed, the kind father of all those living along it—their food, drink, and broad highway.

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Giradot, where we arrived in the evening of the second day out from Honda, is the junction point between the railroad for Bogotá and the river steamers, and the mule-trains that come over the mountains from the west.

The main street the night we arrived was alive with torches, and dozens of little braziers on which were sizzling pancakes, chicken, and fish. There was a circus, too, and a hint of Colombia's relations with her neighbor to the south when the clown, protesting against being hit in the face, said that if he had to be kicked he preferred to be kicked in the Peru.

More fighting porters, baggage to be reweighed, and another hurried breakfast in the warm, wet dawn, and we were off at last on the long climb to the capital. There is only a slight fall between Giradot and the sea, so that one jumps up practically the whole nine thousand feet in a day. The train winds up through foot-hills and the zone of coffee—rarely found below three thousand feet—into a farming country where tropic and temperate zones meet. At the railroad lunch-room at noon there were peaches and apples as well as *papayas*, *grenadillas*, oranges, mangoes, and alligator-pears. It is a beautiful country from there on, a sort of glorified and more tangled Berkshires.

Faces at the stations changed. There was more color and ruggedness. The indolent, golden folk of the river country gave way to a more compact, ruddy, energetic race—the Chibcha Indian mixtures, some almost white. Gradually a mountain coldness and bite crept into the air, the car windows were closed, and the Bogotá people put on their overcoats. The hot country is supposed to make one sensitive, and pneumonia is an awkward thing at this altitude. About the middle of the afternoon the train climbed over the divide, rolled down a thousand feet or so to Facatativá and out across the level plateau toward the capital.

Fields enclosed in adobe walls flowed past, haciendas shielded by trees. At one station stood a young man in riding-clothes, and his two pretty sisters. The languid young Colombian who had been talking to me in English threw up the window and called out a greeting in his own tongue. He hoped to see them soon and tell them about his winter in New York.

"*Hasta luego!* Good-by!" cried the three.

"*Hasta muy pronto!* Till very soon!" answered the traveler, with the accent on the "*muy*".

At a station a little nearer the city he was joined by a bored and rather supercilious young man in mourning, who had evidently come out to meet him. With a melancholy air the young man in black explained his sorrow, gave a quick gesture with his long, slim hands, and, not without an eye for effect, sighed in English, "Such is life!"

It was twilight when we rolled into the station—a chill dusk, although only four degrees from the equator, like late October or November at home. Through narrow, clean, well-paved streets we drove to the hotel—past lighted shops, a trolley-car, newsboys singsonging their papers. Low, thick-walled houses, inviting curiosity but not satisfying it, lined solidly the rectangular streets, and one could imagine back of curtained windows people visiting and, perhaps, sipping chocolate out of antique, hammered-silver cups.

A hooded victoria rolled by, revealing for an instant two gentle, camellia-like faces, framed in black, and as we turned into the main plaza a smart young army officer strode past, wrapped in a long, pale-blue German cape. To the right stretched the low Ionic façade of the government building; in front of us, with a glimpse of dark figures emerging from a misty interior, rose the Cathedral—the church around which the old Spanish conquerors built their towns. Two elderly gentlemen were talking on the corner beneath it, one leaning on his stick and listening, the other elaborating his argument with the air of one who has abundant leisure and a library at home. So might two elderly and rather literary gentlemen meet of a late afternoon near Boston Common—if such things still happen in Boston—and discuss the latest *Atlantic* or some untoward happening in the barbarous outside world.

For all the world was outside now, shut away below us by weeks of mountain trails, river, and ocean, and we were come at last, evidently, to what one almost felt like calling the Lhasa, as others have called it the Athens, of South America—the Bogotá which has lived so long alone, with its poets and politicians, up here under the frosty stars.

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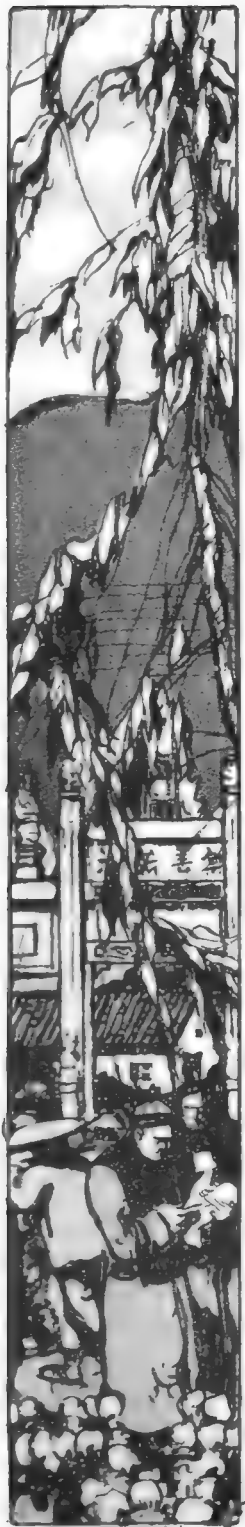

HILLS OF HAN

by

SAMUEL MERWIN

1893

HILLS of Shansi, hills of Han,
Slumber on! The sunlight, dying,
Lingers on your terraced tops;
Yellow stream and willow sighing,
Fields of twice ten thousand crops
Breathe their misty lullabying,
Breathe a life that never stops.
Then and always, down the ages,
So it was, so it will be—
Coolies, merchants, soldiers, sages,
Fan and litter, nest and tea.
Spin your chart of ancient wonder,
Fold your hands within your sleeve,
Live and let live, work and ponder,
Be tradition, dream, believe.
So abides your ancient plan—
Hills of Han!

1913

Hills of Shansi, hills of Han,
What's this filament goes leaping
Pole to pole and hill to hill?
What these strips of metal creeping
Where the dead have lain so still?
What this wilder thought that's seeping
Where was peace and gentle will?
Frantic magic world, a-flying,
Blaze of searchlight in the dark,
Boat of steel where junk was plying,
Spit of turret, crack of spark,
Smoke of mill on road and river,
Roar of steam by temple wall . . .
Drop the arrow in the quiver,
Bow to Buddha—all is all!
Slumber they who slumber can—
Hills of Han!

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The IRON TRAIL

by

REX BEACH

AUTHOR OF "THE NET," "THE NE'ER-DO-WELL," "THE SPOILERS," ETC.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY M. LEONE BRACKER

CHAPTER XXX—GORDON'S DEFEAT

THE news of the White River fiasco reached Curtis Gordon in Seattle, whither he had gone in a final attempt to bolster up the tottering fortunes of the Cortez Home Railway. His disappointment was keen, yet O'Neil from the beginning had met his attacks with such uniform success that new failure did not really surprise him: it had been a forlorn hope at best. Strangely enough, he had begun to lose something of his assurance of late.

Outwardly there was reason enough for discouragement, for while his cooperative railroad scheme had begun brilliantly, its initial success had not been sustained. As time passed and Eliza Appleton's exposure remained unrefuted, he had found it continually more difficult to enlist support. His own denials and explanations seemed powerless to affect the public mind, and, as he looked back, he dated his decline from the appearance of her article. It had done all the mischief he had feared. Not only were his old stockholders dissatisfied, but wherever he went for aid he found a disconcerting lack of response, a half-veiled skepticism that was maddening.

Yet his immediate business worries were not all, nor the worst, of his troubles: his physical powers were waning. To all appearances he was as strong as ever; but a strange bodily lassitude hampered him; he tired easily, and against this handicap he was forced to struggle continually. The change was less in his muscular strength than in his nerves and his mental vigor. He found himself growing peculiarly irritable; his failures excited spasms of blind fury, which left him weak and spent; he began to suffer the depressing tortures of insomnia. At times the nerves in his face and hands twitched unaccountably, and this distressing affection spread.

These symptoms had first manifested themselves after his unmerciful drubbing at the hands of Dan Appleton; but they were not the result of any injury—they were due to some deeper cause. When he had recovered his senses, after the departure of Dan and Natalie, he had fallen into a paroxysm of anger that lasted for days; he had raged and stormed like a madman, for, to say nothing of other humiliations, he prided himself extravagantly on his physical prowess. While the marks of the rough treatment he had suffered were disappearing, he remained indoors, plunged in such abysmal fury that neither Gloria nor the fawning Denny dared approach him. The very force of his emotions had permanently disturbed his poise, or perhaps caused some obscure lesion in his brain.

He had tried to regain his nervous control, but without success, and his wife's anxiety only chafed him further. Gradually he lost his mental buoyancy, and for the first time in his life he really yielded to pessimism.

All in all, when he reached the States on his critical mission, he knew that he was far from being his old self; and he had deteriorated more than he knew.

A week or two of disappointments should

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have shown him the futility of further effort; at any other time it would have set him to putting his house in order for the final crash; but now it merely enraged him. He redoubled his activity, launching a new campaign of publicity so extravagant and ill-timed as to repel the assistance he needed. He had lost his finesse; his nicely adjusted financial sense had gone.

The outcome was not long delayed: it came in the form of a newspaper dispatch to the effect that his Cortez bank had suspended payment because of a run started by the dissatisfied employees of the railroad. Through Gordon's flamboyant advertising, his enterprises were so well known, by this time, that the story was featured despite his efforts to kill it. His frantic cables to Cortez for a denial only brought assurances that the report was true and that conditions would not mend unless a shipment of currency was immediately forthcoming.

Harassed by reporters, driven on by the need for a show of action, he set out to raise the money; but the support he had hoped for failed him when it transpired that his bank's assets consisted mainly of real estate at boom prices and stock in his various companies which had been inflated to the bursting point. Days passed, a week or more, then he was compelled to relinquish his option on the steamship line he had partly purchased, and sacrifice all that had been paid in on the enterprise. This, too, made a big story for the newspapers, for it punctured one of the most imposing corporations in the famous "Gordon System." It likewise threatened to involve the others in the general crash.

Hope Consolidated, indeed, still remained, and Gordon's declaration that the value of its shares was more than sufficient to protect his bank met with some credence, until, swift upon the heels of the other disasters, came an application for a receiver by the stockholders, coupled with the promise of a rigorous investigation into his various financial manipulations.

Then, at last, Gordon acknowledged defeat.

He still kept up a fairly successful pretense of confidence, and publicly he promised to bring order out of the chaos; but in secret he gave way to the blackest despair. Heretofore, failure had never affected him deeply, for he had always managed to escape with advantage to his pocket and without serious damage to his prestige; but out of the present difficulty he could find no way. His office force stopped work, frightened at his bearing; the bell-boys at his hotel brought to the desk tales of such maniacal violence that he was requested to move.

At last the citizens of Cortez, who up to this time had been like putty in his fingers, realized their betrayal and turned against him. Creditors attached the railway property; certain violent-tempered men prayed openly and earnestly to their gods for his return to Alaska in order that they might exact satisfaction in frontier fashion; Eastern investors in Hope Consolidated appeared in Seattle; there was talk of criminal procedure.

Bewildered as he was, Gordon knew that the avalanche had not only wrecked his fortunes, but was bearing him swiftly toward the penitentiary, and he felt a chilling terror such as he had never known.

One evening as Captain Johnny Brennan stood on the dock superintending the final loading of a cargo for the S. R. & N., he was accosted by a tall, nervous man with shifting eyes and twitching lips. It was hard to recognize in this pitiable, shaken creature the once resplendent Gordon, who had bent the whole Northland to his ends. Some tormenting demons inside the man's frame were jerking at his sinews. Fear was in his roving glance; he stammered; he plucked at the little captain's sleeve like a frightened woman. The open-hearted Irishman was touched.

"Yes," said Johnny, after listening for a time, "I'll take you with me, and they won't catch you, either."

Gordon chattered: 'I'll pay you well, handsomely. I'm a rich man. I have interests that demand attention, so—accept this money. Please! Keep it all, my good fellow."

Brennan stared at the bundle Gordon had thrust into his hand, then regarded the speaker curiously. "Man, dear," he said, "this isn't money. These are stock certificates."

"Eh? Stock? Well! There's money in stocks, big money, if you know how to handle them." The promoter's wandering eye shifted to the line of stevedores trundling their trucks into the hold, then up to

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the crane with its straining burden of bridge material. Every package was stenciled with his rival's name, but he exclaimed:

"Bravo, Captain! We'll be up to the summit by Christmas. 'No graft! No incompetence! The utmost publicity in corporate affairs!'—that's our platform. We're destined for a glorious success. Glorious success!"

"Go aboard and lie down," Brennan said gently. "You need a good sleep." Then, calling a steward, he ordered: "Show Mr. Gordon to my cabin and give him what he wants."

He watched the tall figure stumble up the gangplank, and shook his head: " 'The utmost publicity,' is it? Well, it's you that's getting it now. And to think that you're the man with the mines, and the railroads, and the widow! I'm afraid you'll be in irons when she sees you, but—that's as good a finish as you deserve, after all."

CHAPTER XXXI

PREPARATIONS

The building of the Salmon River bridge will not soon be forgotten by engineers and men of science. But while the technical features of the undertaking are familiar to a few, the general public knows little about how the work was actually done.

Nowhere else in the history of bridge-building had such conditions been encountered; nowhere on earth had work of this character been attended with greater hazards; never had circumstances created a situation of more dramatic interest. By many the whole venture was regarded as a reckless gamble; for more than a million dollars had been risked on the chance not only that O'Neil could build supports which the ice could not demolish, but that he could build them under the most serious difficulties in record-breaking time.

Far more than the mere cost of the structure hinged upon his success: failure would mean that his whole investment up to that point would be wiped out, to say nothing of the twenty-million-dollar project of a trunk line up the valley of the Salmon.

Careful as had been the plans, exhaustive and painstaking as had been the preparations, the bridge builders met with unpreventable delays, disappointments, and disasters.

Of course the greatest handicap, the one ever-present obstacle, was the cold, and this made itself most troublesome in the sinking of the caissons and the building of the concrete piers. It was necessary, for instance, to house in all cement work, and to raise the temperature not only of the air surrounding it, but of the materials themselves, before they were mixed and laid. Huge wind-breaks had to be built to protect the outside men from the gales that scoured the river-bed, and these were forever blowing down or suffering damage from the hurricanes.

All this, however, had been anticipated: it was but the normal condition of work in the Northland. And it was not until the middle of winter, shortly after Eliza's and Natalie's visit to the front, that an unexpected danger threatened, a danger more appalling than any upon which O'Neil and his assistants had reckoned.

In laying his plans, Parker had proceeded upon the assumption that once the cold had gripped the glaciers they would remain motionless until spring. All available evidence went to prove the correctness of this supposition. But Alaska is a land of surprises, of contrasts, of contradictions; study of its phenomena is too recent to make practicable the laying down of hard and fast rules. In the midst of this season of cruelly low temperatures there came a thaw, unprecedented, inexplicable. A tremendous warm breath from the Pacific rolled northward, enveloping the frozen plains and mountain ranges. Blizzards turned to rains and weeping fogs, the dry and shifting snow-fields melted, water ran in the courses. Winter loosed its hold; its mantle slipped.

Nothing like this had ever been known or imagined. It was impossible! It was as if the unhallowed region were bent upon living up to its evil reputation. In a short time the loosened waters that trickled through the sleeping ice-fields greased the foundations upon which they lay. Jackson Glacier roused itself, then began to glide forward, like a ship upon its ways.

First there came the usual premonitory explosions — the sound of subterranean blasts as the ice cracked, gave way, and shifted to the weight above; echoes filled the sodden valley with memories of the summer months. It was as if the seasons had changed. The frozen surface of the

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Salmon was inundated; water four feet deep in some places ran over it.

The general wonder changed to consternation when it was seen that the glacier acted like a battering-ram of stupendous size, buckling the river ice in front of it as if the ice were made of paper. That seven-foot armor was crushed, broken into a thousand fragments, which threatened to choke the stream. A half mile below the bridge site the Salmon was pinched as if between two jaws; its smooth surface was rapidly turned into an indescribable jumble of up-ended cakes.

When a fortnight had passed, O'Neil began to fear that this movement would go on until the channel had been closed as by a huge sliding door. In that case the rising waters would quickly wipe out all traces of his work. Such a crumpling and shifting of the ice had never occurred before—at least, not within fifty years, as the alder and cottonwood growth on the east bank showed; but nothing seemed impossible, no prank too grimly grotesque for Nature to play in this solitude.

Day after day O'Neil watched the progress of that white palisade; day after day he scanned the heavens for a sign of change, for out of the sky alone could come his deliverance. Hourly tests were made at the bridge-site to anticipate the moment when the ice should give way before the pressure from below and by moving up-stream destroy the intricate pattern of piling which was being driven to support the steel work. Day after day the snows continued to melt and the rain to fall. Two rivers were now boiling past the camp, one hidden deep, the other a shallow torrent which ran upon a bed of ice. The valley was rent by the sounds of the glacier's snail-like progress.

Then without apparent cause the seasons fell into order again, the mercury dropped, the surface water disappeared, the country was sheeted with a glittering crust over which men walked, leaving no trace of footprints. Jackson Glacier became silent. Again the wind blew cold from out of the funnel mouth, and the bridge builders threshed their arms to start their blood. But the glacier face had advanced four hundred feet from its position in August; it had narrowed the Salmon by fully one-half its width.

Fortunately, the bridge had suffered no damage as yet, and no one foresaw the effect which these altered conditions were to have.

The actual erection of steel work was impossible during the coldest months; Parker had planned only to rush the piers, abutments, and false-work to completion so that he could take advantage of the mild spring weather preceding the break-up. The execution of this plan was in itself an unparalleled undertaking, making it necessary to hire double crews of picked men. Yet, as the weeks wore into months, the intricate details were wrought out one by one, and preparations were completed for the great race against time.

Late in March Dan Appleton went to the front, taking with him his wife and his sister, for whom O'Neil had prepared suitable living quarters. The girls were as hungry as Dan to have a part in the deciding struggle, or at least to see it, for the spirit of those engaged in the work had taken possession of them also. But life at the end of the line they found to be a very grim, a very earnest, and in some respects an extremely disagreeable affair; the feverish, unceasing activity of their friends left no time for companionship or recreation. More and more they too came to feel the sense of haste and strain pervading the army of workers, the responsibility that bore upon the commander.

Dan became almost a stranger to them, and when they saw him he was obsessed by vital business. Mellen was gruff and irritable. Parker in his preoccupation ignored everything but his duties. Of all their former comrades O'Neil alone seemed aware of their presence. And behind his smile they saw the lurking worries, in his eyes was an abstraction they could not penetrate, in his bearing the fatigue of a man tried to the breaking-point.

To Eliza there was a certain joy merely in being near the man she loved, even though she could not help being hurt by his apparent indifference. The long weeks without sight of him had deepened her feeling, and she had turned for relief to the writing of her novel. Into its pages she had poured all her passion, all her yearning; and she had written with an intimate understanding of O'Neil's ambitions which later gave the story its unique success.

Eliza could not be content with idleness; she took up the work that she and Natalie had begun, devoting herself unobtrusively yet effectively to making O'Neil comfortable. It was a labor of love, done with no

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expectation of reward; it thrilled her, filling her with mingled sadness and satisfaction.

But if Murray noticed the improvement in his surroundings, he evidently attributed it to a sudden access of zeal on the part of Ben, the cook-boy, for he made no comment.

Whether or not she wished him to see and understand, she could hardly tell. Somehow his unobservant, masculine acceptance of things better and worse appealed to the woman in her. She slipped into his quarters during his absence, and slipped out again quietly; she learned to know his ways, his peculiarities; she found herself caressing and talking to his personal belongings as if they could hear and understand.

One morning Ben entered unexpectedly and surprised her in the act of kissing Murray's shaving-mirror as if it still preserved the image of its owner's face—after which she banished the cook-boy utterly and performed his duties with her own hands.

Of course discovery was inevitable. At last O'Neil stumbled in upon her in the midst of her task and, questioning her, read the truth from her blushes and her incoherent attempts at explanation.

"So! You're the one who has been doing this!" he exclaimed in frank astonishment. "And I've been tipping Benny for his thoughtfulness all this time! The rascal has made enough to retire rich."

"He seemed not to understand his duties very well, so I took charge. But you had no business to catch me!" The flush died from Eliza's cheeks, and she faced him with thoroughly feminine indignation.

"I can't let you go on with this," said Murray. "*I* ought to be doing something for *you*."

But the girl flared up defiantly. "I love it. I'll do it, no matter if you lock me out. I'm not on the pay-roll, you know, so you have no authority over me—none at all!"

His eyes roved around the room, and for the first time he fully took in the changes her hands had wrought.

"My dear child, it's very nice to be spoiled this way, and have everything neat and clean, but—it embarrasses me dreadfully to have you saddled with the sordid work——"

"It isn't sordid and—what brought you home at this hour, anyhow?" she demanded.

O'Neil's smile gave place to an anxious frown.

"The ice is rising, and——"

"Rising?"

"Yes. Our old enemy, Jackson Glacier, is causing us trouble again. That jam of broken ice in front of it is backing up the water—there's more running now, and the ice is lifting. It's lifting the false-work with it, pulling the piles out of the river-bottom, like splinters out of a sore hand."

"That's pretty bad, isn't it?"

"It certainly is. It threatens to throw everything out of alignment and prevent us from laying the steel, if we don't check it."

"Check it!" cried Eliza. "How can you check a thing like that?"

"Easily enough, if we can spare the hands—by cutting away the ice where it is frozen to the piles, so that it won't lift them with it. The trouble is to get men enough—you see the ice is nine feet thick now. I've set every man to work with axes and chisels and steam-points, and I came up to telephone Slater for more help. We'll have to work fast, night and day."

"There's nobody left in Omar," Eliza said quickly.

"I know. Tom's going to gather all he can at Cortez and Hope, and rush them out here. Our task is to keep the ice cut away until help arrives."

"I suppose it's too late in the season to repair any serious damage?"

"Exactly. If you care to go back with me, you can see what we're doing."

When they reached the river bank, she saw everything apparently just as when she had last seen it. "Why, it's not as bad as I imagined!" she exclaimed. "I thought I'd find everything going to smash."

"Oh, there's nothing spectacular about it. There seldom is about serious mishaps in this business. The ice has risen only an inch or more so far, but the very slowness and sureness of it is what's alarming. It shows that the water is backing up, and as the flow increases the rise of the ice will quicken. If it starts to move up or down stream, we're lost."

There was ample evidence that the menace was thoroughly understood by the men, for the whole day-shift was toiling at the ice, chopping it, thawing it, shoveling it away, although its tremendous thickness made their efforts seem puerile. Everywhere was manifested a frantic haste,

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a grim, strained eagerness that was full of ominous meaning.

All that day Eliza watched the unequal struggle, and in the evening Dan brought her reports that were far from reassuring. The relentless movement showed no sign of ceasing. When she retired that night she sought ease from her anxiety in a prayer that was half a petition for O'Neil's success and half an exceedingly full and frank confession of her love for him.

Outside, beneath the glare of torches and hastily strung incandescents, a weary army toiled, digging, gouging, chopping at the foot of the towering wall of timbers which stretched across the Salmon. In the north the aurora borealis played brilliantly, as if to light a council of the gods.

On the following day, Happy Tom arrived with fifty men.

"I got the last mother's son I could find," he explained as he warmed himself at O'Neil's stove.

"Did you go to Hope?"

"I did, and I saw the splavvus himself."

"Gordon?"

"He's worse than we thought." Tom tapped his shining forehead significantly. "Loft to let!"

"What—insane?"

"Nothing but echoes in his dome. The town's as empty as his bonnet, too, and the streets are full of snow. It's a sight!"

"Tell me about Mrs. Gordon."

"She's quite a person," said Slater slowly. "She surprised me. She's there, alone with him and a watchman. She does all the work, even to lugging in the wood and coal—he's too busy to help—but she won't leave him. She told me that Dan and Natalie wanted her to come over here, but she couldn't bring herself to do it or to let them assist in any way. Gordon spends all his time at his desk, promoting, writing "ads" and prospectuses. He's got a grand scheme. He's found that 'Hope Consolidated' is full of rich ore, but the trouble is in getting it out; so he's working on a new process of extraction. It's a wonderful process—you'd never guess what it is. He *smokes* it out! He says all he needs is plenty of smoke. That bothered him until he hit on the idea of burning feathers. Now he's planning to raise ducks, because they've got so much down. Isn't that the limit? She'll have to fit him into a padded cell, sooner or later."

"Poor devil!" said O'Neil. "I'm sorry. He had an unusual mind."

Slater sniffed. "I think it's pretty soft for him, myself. He's made better than a stand-off—he lost his memory, but he saved his skin. It's funny how some men can't fall: if they slip on a banana-peel somebody shoves a cushion under 'em before they light. *I* never got the best of anything. If I dropped asleep in church my wife would divorce me and I'd go to the electric chair. Gordon robs widows and orphans, right and left, then ends up with a loving woman to take care of him in his old age. Why, if I even robbed a blind puppy of a biscuit I'd leave a thumb-print on his ear, or the dog's mother would turn out to be a bloodhound."

Having relieved himself of this fervid lament, Happy Tom unrolled a package of gum and thrust three sticks into his mouth.

For a week the ice rose slowly, a foot a day, and in spite of the greatest watchfulness it took the false-work with it here and there. But concentrated effort at the critical points saved the structure from serious injury. Then the jam in front of Jackson Glacier went out, at least in part, and the ice began to fall. Down it settled, smoothly, swiftly, until it rested once more upon the shores. It was still as firm as in midwinter and showed no sign of breaking, nor had it moved down-stream a hair's breadth.

O'Neil gathered his forces for the final onslaught.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE RACE

On April fifth the last of the steel for Span Number One reached the front, and erection was begun. The men fell to with a vim and an enthusiasm impossible to describe. With incredible rapidity the heavy sections were laid in place; the riveters began their metallic song; the towering three-bent traveler ran smoothly on its track, and under it grew a webwork of metal, braced and reenforced to withstand, in addition to ordinary strains, the pressure of a hundred-mile-an-hour wind.

To those who looked on, the structure appeared to build itself, like some dream edifice; it seemed a miracle that human hands could work that stubborn metal so swiftly and with so little effort. But every

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piece had been cut and fitted carefully, then checked and placed where it was accessible.

Now that winter had broken, spring came with a rush. The snows began to shrink and the drifts to settle. The air grew balmier with every day; the drip from eaves was answered by the gurgling laughter of hidden waters. Here and there the boldest mountain sides began to show, and the tops of alder thickets thrust themselves into sight. Where wood or metal caught the sun-rays the snow retreated; pools of ice-water began to form at noon.

The days were long, too, and no frozen winds charged out of the north. As the daylight lengthened, so did the working hours of the toilers.

On April eighteenth the span was completed. In thirteen days Mellen's crew had laid four hundred feet of the heaviest steel ever used in a bridge of this type. But there was no halt; the material for the second section had been assembled meanwhile, and the traveler began to swing it into place.

The din was unceasing: the clash of riveters, the creak and rattle of hoists, the shouts of men mingled in a persistent, ear-splitting clamor; and foot by foot the girders reached out toward the second monolith which rose from the river bed. The well-adjusted human machine was running smoothly; every man knew his place and the duties that went with it; the hands of every worker were capable and skilled.

But now the hillsides were growing bare, rills gashed the sloping snowfields, the upper gullies began to rumble with avalanches—forerunners of the process that would strip the earth of snow and ice and free the river in all its fury.

In six days, three hundred feet more of steel had been bolted fast to the completed section, and Span Two was in place. But the surface of the Salmon was no longer white and pure; it was dirty and discolored now, for the débris which had collected during the past winter was exposing itself. The icy covering was partly inundated also; shallow ponds formed upon it, and were rippled by the south breeze. Running waters on every side sang a menace to the workers.

Then progress ceased abruptly. It became known that a part of the material for the third span had gone astray in its long journey across the continent. There had been a delay at the Pittsburgh mills, then a blockade in the Sierras. O'Neil was in Omar at the end of the cable straining every nerve to get the shipment rushed through. Mellen brooded over his uncompleted work. Parker studied the dripping hills and measured the melting snows; he still smiled, but he showed his anxiety in a constant nervous unrest.

At length, news came that Johnny Brennan had the steel aboard his ship and had sailed. A record run was predicted, but meanwhile the south wind brought havoc on its breath. The sun shone hotly into the valley of the Salmon, and instead of warmth it brought a chill to the hearts of those who watched and waited.

Twelve endless, idle days crawled by. Winter no longer gave battle; she was routed, and in her mad retreat she threatened to overwhelm O'Neil's fortunes.

On May sixth the needed bridge members were assembled, and the erection of Span Three began. The original plan had been to build this section on the cantilever principle, so as to gain independence of the river ice; but to do so would have meant slow work and much delay—an expenditure of time which the terms of the option made impossible. Arrangements were made, therefore, to lay it on false-work, as the other spans had been laid, risking everything upon the weather.

As a matter of precaution the southern half of the span was connected to the completed portion; but before the connection could be fully made, the remainder of the jam in front of Jackson Glacier, which had caused so much trouble before, went out suddenly, and the river ice moved downstream about a foot, carrying with it the whole intricate system of supporting timbers beneath the uncompleted span. Hasty measurements showed that the north end of the steel then on the false-work was thirteen inches out of line.

It was Mr. Blaine who brought the tidings of this last calamity to Eliza. From his evident anxiety she gathered that the matter was of graver consequence than she could understand.

"Thirteen inches in fifteen hundred feet can't amount to much," she said vaguely.

Blaine smiled in spite of himself. "You don't understand. It's as bad as thirteen feet, for the work can't go on until everything is in perfect alignment. That whole forest of piles must be straightened."

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"Impossible!" she gasped. "Why, there are thousands of them!"

He shook his head, still smiling doubtfully. "Nothing is impossible to Mellen and Parker. They've begun clearing away the ice on the up-stream side and driving new anchor piles above. They're going to fit tackle to them and yank the whole thing up-stream. I never heard of such a thing, but there's no time to do anything else." He cast a worried look at the smiling sky. "I wonder what will happen next. This is getting on my nerves."

Out on the river, swift work was going on. Steam from every available boiler was carried across the ice in feed-pipes; the night shift had been roused from sleep; and every available man was busied in relieving the pressure. Pile-drivers were hammering long timbers into the river-bed above the threatened point; hydraulic jacks were put in place; and steel cables were run to drum and pulley. The men were working sometimes knee-deep in ice-water; they did not walk—they ran.

In an incredibly short time the preparations were completed, a strain was put upon the tackle, and when night came the massive false-work had been pulled back into line and the traveler was once more swinging steel into place. It was a magnificent feat, yet not one of those concerned in it could feel confident that the work had not been done in vain; for the time was growing terribly short, and the ice was rotting fast.

After the southern half of the span had been completed, the warmth increased rapidly, and the steel crew lengthened its hours. The men worked from seven o'clock in the morning until eleven o'clock at night.

On the thirteenth, without warning of any sort, Garfield Glacier began moving forward. He had lain inactive even during the midwinter thaw which had started his smaller brother; but that warm spell had evidently had its effect upon the giant, for now he shook off his lethargy and awoke. He stirred, gradually at first and without sound, as if bent upon surprising the interlopers; then his speed increased.

As the glacier advanced it thrust the nine-foot blanket of lake ice ahead of it, and this in turn crowded the river ice down upon the bridge. The movement at the camp-site on the first day was only two inches, but that was serious.

The onset of Garfield at this time was, of course, unexpected; for no forward motion had ever been reported prior to the spring break-up. The action of the ice heretofore had been alarming, but now consternation spread and a panic swept the ranks of the builders—for this was no short-lived phenomenon: this was the annual march of the glacier itself, which promised to continue indefinitely. A tremendous cutting edge, nine feet in thickness, like the blade of a carpenter's plane, was being driven against the bridge by an irresistible force.

Once again the endless thawing and chopping and gouging of ice began; but the more rapidly the encroaching edge was cut away the more swiftly did it bear down. The huge mass began to rumble; it "calved," it split, it detonated, and, having finally loosened itself from its bed, it acquired increased momentum.

As the men with chisels and steam-points became exhausted, others took their places; but the structural gang clung to its perch above, augmenting the din of riveters and the groaning of blocks and tackle. Among the able-bodied men sleep now was out of the question, for the ice gained in spite of every effort. It was too late to remove the steel in the uncompleted span to a place of safety, for that would have required more time than to bridge the remaining gap.

Piling began to buckle and bend before that irresistible push; the whole nicely balanced mass of metal was in danger of being unseated. Mellen cursed the heavens in a black fury, Parker smiled through white lips, O'Neil ground his teeth and spurred his men on.

This feverish haste brought its penalty. On the evening of the fourteenth, when the span was more than three-quarters finished, a lower chord section fouled as it was lifted, and two loading beams at the top of the traveler snapped.

On that day victory had been in sight; the driving of the last bolt had been but a question of hours, a race with the sliding ice. But with the hoisting apparatus out of use work halted. Swiftly, desperately, without loss of a moment's time, repairs began. No regrets were voiced, no effort was made to place the blame, for that would have caused delay, and every minute counted. Eleven hours later the broken beams were replaced and erection had recommenced.

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"I'M AFRAID YOU'LL GO AWAY AND—LEAVE ME. YOU WON'T EVER—WILL YOU?"

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But now for those above there was danger to life and limb. During the pause the ice had gained, and no effort could relieve the false-work of its strain. All knew that if it gave way the workmen would be caught in a chaos of collapsing wood and steel.

From the morning of May fourteenth until midnight of the sixteenth the ironworkers clung to their tasks. They dropped their tools and ran to their meals; they gulped their food and fled back to their posts. The weaker ones gave out and staggered away, cursed and taunted by their companions. They were rough fellows, and in their deep-throated profanity was a prayer.

The strong ones struggled on, blind with weariness, but upheld by that desperate, unthinking courage which animates a bayonet charge. It seemed that every moment must see the beginning of that slow work of demolition which would send them all scurrying to safety; but hour after hour the piling continued to hold and the fingers of steel to reach out, foot by foot, for the concrete pier which was their goal.

At midnight of the sixteenth the last rivet was driven; but the ice had gained to such an extent that the lower chord was buckled down-stream about eight inches, and the distance was growing steadily. Quickly the traveler was shifted to the false-work beyond the pier, and the men under Mellen's direction fell to splitting out the blocking.

As the supports were chopped away the mass began to crush the last few wedges; there was a great snapping and rending of wood, and some one, strained to the breaking-point, shouted:

"Look out! There she goes!"

A cry of terror arose; the men fled, trampling each other in their panic. But Mellen charged them like a wild man, firing curses and orders at them until they rallied. The remaining supports were removed and the fifteen hundred tons of metal settled into place and rested securely on its foundations.

O'Neil was the last man ashore. As he walked the completed span from Pier Three the barricade of piling beneath him was bending and tearing; but he issued no orders to remove it, for the river was doing that. In the general haste, pile-drivers, hoists, boilers, and various odds and ends of machinery and material had been left where they stood. They were being inundated now; many of them were all but submerged. There was no possibility of saving them at present, for the men were half dead from exhaustion.

As he lurched up the muddy, uneven street to his quarters, Murray felt his fatigue like a heavy burden, for he had been sixty hours without sleep. He saw Slater and Appleton and the rest of his "boys"; he saw Natalie and Eliza; but he was too tired to speak to them, or to grasp what they said. He heard the workmen cheering Mellen and Parker and himself. It was very foolish, he thought, to cheer, since the final test was yet to come. He fell upon his bed, clothed as he was.

An hour later the false-work beneath Span Three collapsed.

Although the bridge was not yet finished, the most critical point in its construction had been passed; for the fourth and final portion would be built over shallow water, and no great difficulties were to be expected, even though the ice went out before the work was finished. But Murray had made his promise and his boast to complete the structure within a stated time, and he was determined to live up to the very letter of his agreement with the trust. As to the result of the break-up he had no fear whatever.

For once Nature aided him: she seemed to smile as if in approval of his steadfastness. The movement of the channel ice became spasmodic, but it remained firm until the last span had been put in place.

Of this dramatic struggle Eliza Appleton had watched every phase with intensest interest; but when at last she knew that the battle was won, she experienced a peculiar revulsion of feeling. So long as O'Neil had been working against odds, with the prospect of ruin and failure forever imminent, she had felt an almost painful sympathy, but now that he had conquered she felt timid about congratulating him. He was no longer to be pitied and helped; he had attained his goal and the fame he longed for. His success would inevitably take him out of her life.

She did not watch the last bridge member swung, but went to her room and tried to face the future. Spring was here; her book was almost finished; there was the need to take up her life again.

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She was surprised when Murray came to find her.

"I missed you, Eliza," he said. "The others are all down at the river bank. I want you to congratulate me."

She saw, with a jealous twinge, that exultation over his victory had overcome his weariness, that his face was alight with a fire she had never seen. He seemed young, vigorous, and masterful once more.

"Of course," he went on, "the credit belongs to Parker, who worked the bridge out in each detail — he's marvelous — and to Mellen, who actually built it; but I helped a little. Praise to me means praise to them."

"It is all over now, isn't it?"

"Practically. Blaine has cabled New York that we've won. Strictly speaking, we haven't as yet, for there's still the break-up to face; but the bridge will come through it without a scratch. The ice may go out any minute now, and after that I can rest." He smiled at her happily. "It will feel good to get rid of all this responsibility, won't it? I think you've suffered under it as much as I have."

A little wistfully she answered: "You're going to realize that dream you told me about, the day of the storm at Kyak. You have conquered this great country—just as you dreamed."

He acquiesced eagerly, boyishly. "Yes. Whirring wheels, a current of traffic, a broad highway of steel—that's the sort of monument I want to leave."

"Some time I'll come back and see it all completed and tell myself that I had a little part in making it."

"Come back?" he queried. "Why, you're going to stay till we're through, aren't you?"

"Oh, no! I'm going south with the spring flight—on the next boat, perhaps."

His face fell; the exultant light gradually faded from his eyes. "Why—I had no idea! Aren't you happy here?"

She nodded. "But I must try to make good in my work as you have in yours."

He was looking at her sorrowfully, almost as if she had deserted him. "That's too bad, but—I suppose you must go. Yes! This is no place for you. I dare say other people need you to bring sunshine and joy to them as we old fellows do, but —I've never thought about your leaving. It wouldn't be right to ask you to stay here among such people as we are, when you have so much ahead of you. Still, it will leave a gap! Yes—it certainly will—leave a gap."

She longed desperately to tell him how willingly she would stay if he would only ask her; but the very thought shocked her into a deeper reserve.

"I'm going east to sell my book," she said stiffly. "You've given me the climax of the story in this race with the seasons."

"Is it a—love story?" he asked.

Eliza flushed. "Yes. It's mostly love."

"You're not at all the girl I thought you when we first met. You're very—different. I'm sure I won't recognize myself as the hero. Who—or what—is the girl in the story?"

"Well, she's just the kind of girl that would appeal to a person like you. She's tall and dark and dashing, and—of course she's remarkably beautiful. She's very feminine, too."

"What's her name?"

Miss Appleton stammered: "Why—I—called her 'Violet'—until I could think of a better——"

"What's wrong with 'Violet?' You couldn't think of a better name than that. I'm fond of it."

"Oh, it's a good book-name, but for real life it's too—delicate." Eliza felt with vexation that her face was burning. She was sure he was laughing at her.

"Can't I read the manuscript?" he pleaded.

"Heavens! No! I—" She changed the subject abruptly. "I've left word to be called the minute the ice starts to go out. I want to see the last act of the drama."

When O'Neil left her, he was vaguely perplexed, for something in her bearing did not seem quite natural. He was forlorn, too, at the prospect of losing her. He wondered if fathers suffered thus, or if a lover could be more deeply pained at a parting than he was. Somehow he seemed to share the feelings of both.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HOW A DREAM CAME TRUE

Early on the following morning Eliza was awakened by a sound of shouting outside her window. She lay half dazed for a moment or two, until the significance of the

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uproar made itself apparent, then she leaped from her bed.

Men were crying:

"There she goes!'

"She's going out!'

Doors were slamming, there was the rustle and scuff of flying feet, and in the next room Dan was evidently throwing himself into his clothes like a fireman. Eliza called to him, but he did not answer, and the next moment he had fled, upsetting some piece of furniture in his haste.

Drawing her curtains aside, in the brightening dawn the girl saw men pouring down the street, dressing as they went. They seemed half demented; they were yelling at each other, but she could not gather from their words whether it was the ice that was moving or—the bridge.

The bridge! That possibility set her to dressing with tremulous fingers, her heart sick with fear. She called to Natalie, but scarcely recognized her own voice.

"I—don't know," came the muffled reply to her question. "It sounds like something—terrible. I'm afraid Dan will fall in or—get hurt." The confusion in the street was growing. "*Eliza!*"—Natalie's voice was tragic.

"What is it, dear?"

"H-help me, quick!"

"How?"

"I can't find my other shoe."

But Eliza was sitting on the floor, lacing up her own stout boots, and an instant later she followed her brother, pursued by a wail of dismay from the adjoining chamber. Through the chill morning light she hurried, asking many questions but receiving no coherent reply from the racing men; then after endless moments of suspense she saw with relief that the massive superstructure of the bridge was still standing.

Above the shouting she heard another sound, indistinct but insistent. It filled the air with a whispering, punctuated at intervals by a dull rumbling and grinding. She found the river-bank black with forms, but like a cat she wormed her way through the crowd until the whole panorama lay before her.

The bridge stood as she had seen it on the day before, slender, strong, superb in the simplicity of its splendid outline; but beneath it and as far as her eyes could follow the river she saw, not the solid spread of white to which she had become accustomed, but a moving expanse of floes.

At first they slipped past in huge masses, acres in extent; but soon these began to be rent apart — irregular black seams ran through them, opened, closed, and threw up ridges of ice-shavings as they ground together. They rubbed against the banks; they came sliding out over the dry shore like tremendous sheets of cardboard manipulated by unseen hands; and not until their nine-foot edges were exposed to view did the mind grasp the appalling significance of their movement. They swept down in phalanxes upon the wedge-like ice-breakers which stood guard above the bridge-piers; then they halted, separated, and the armored cutting edges sheared through them like blades.

A half-mile below, where the Salmon flung itself headlong against the upper wing of Jackson Glacier, the floating ice was checked by the narrowed passageway. There a jam was forming, and as the river heaved and tore at its growing burden a spectacular struggle went on. The sound of it came faintly but impressively to the watchers—a grinding and crushing of bergs, a roar of escaping waters. Fragments were up-ended, masses were rearing themselves edgewise into the air, were overturning and collapsing. They were wedging themselves into every conceivable angle, and the crowding procession from above was adding to the barrier momentarily. As the passageway became blocked the waters rose; the river piled itself up so swiftly that the eye could note its rise along the banks.

But the attention of the crowd was divided between the jam and something far out on the bridge itself. At first glance Eliza did not comprehend; then she heard a man explaining:

"He was going out when we got here, and now he won't come back."

The girl gasped, for she recognized the distant figure of a man, dwarfed to puny proportions by the bulk of the structure in the mazes of which he stood. The man was O'Neil; he was perched upon one of the girders near the center of the longest span, where he could watch the attack upon the pyramidal ice-breakers beneath him.

"He's a fool," said some one at Eliza's back. "That jam is getting bigger."

"He'd better let the damned bridge take care of itself."

She turned and began to force her way through the press of people between her

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and the south abutment. She arrived there, disheveled and panting, to find Slater, Mellen and Parker standing in the approach. In front of them extended the long skeleton tunnel into which Murray had gone.

"Mr. O'Neil is out there!" she cried to Tom.

Slater turned and, reading the tragic appeal in her face, said reassuringly: "Sure! But he's all right."

"They say—there's danger."

Happy Tom's round visage puckered into a doubtful smile. "Oh, he'll take care of himself."

Mellen turned to the girl and said briefly: "There's no danger whatever."

But Eliza's fear was not to be so easily quieted. "Then why did he go out alone? What are you men doing here?"

"It's his orders," Tom told her.

Mellen was staring at the jam below, over which the Salmon was hurling a flood of ice and foaming waters. The stream was swelling and rising steadily; already it had nearly reached the level of the timber line on the left bank; the blockade was extending up-stream almost to the bridge itself. Mellen said something to Parker, who shook his head silently.

Dan Appleton shouldered his way out of the crowd, with Natalie at his heels.

"Why don't you make Murray come in?" Dan demanded sharply of the men.

"He won't do it," muttered Slater.

"The jam is growing. Nobody knows what'll happen if it holds much longer. If the bridge should go——"

Mellen whirled, crying savagely: "It won't go! All hell couldn't take it out!"

From the ranks of the workmen came a bellow of triumph, as an unusually heavy ice-floe was swept against the breakers and rent asunder. The tumult of the imprisoned waters below was growing louder every moment; across the lake came a stentorian rumble as a huge mass was loosened from the front of Garfield. The channel of the Salmon where the onlookers stood was a heaving, churning caldron over which the slim bridge flung itself defiantly.

Eliza plucked at her brother's sleeve imploringly, and he saw her for the first time.

"Hello, Sis," he cried. "How did you get here?"

"Is he in—danger, Danny?"

"Yes—no! Mellen says it's all right, so it must be, but—that dam——"

At that moment Natalie began to sob hysterically and Dan turned his attention to her.

But his sister was not of the hysterical kind. Seizing Tom Slater by the arm, she tried to shake him, demanding fiercely:

"Suppose the jam doesn't give way! What will happen?" Happy Tom stared at her uncomprehendingly. Her voice was shrill and insistent. "Suppose the water rises higher. Won't the ice sweep down on the bridge itself? Won't it wreck everything, if it goes out suddenly? Tell me——"

"It *can't* hold. Mellen says so." Slater, like the others, found it impossible to keep his eyes from the river where those immeasurable forces were at play. In his peculiar irascible manner he complained: "I told 'em we was crazy to try this. It ain't a white man's country; it ain't a safe place for a bridge. There's just one God-awful thing after another—" He broke into a shout, for Eliza had slipped past him and was speeding like a shadow out across the irregularly spaced ties upon which the bridge-track was laid.

Mellen whirled at the cry and made after her, but he might as well have tried to catch the wind. As she ran, she heard her brother shout in sudden alarm and Natalie's voice raised in entreaty; but she sped on under an impulse as irresistible as panic fear. Down through the openings beneath her feet she saw, as in a nightmare, the sweeping flood, burdened with plunging ice-chunks and flecked with foam. She seemed to be suspended above it, yet she was running at reckless speed, dimly aware of the consequences of a misjudged footstep, but fearful only of being overtaken.

Suddenly she hated her companions; her mind was in a furious revolt at their cowardice, their indecision, or whatever it was that held them, like a group of wooden figures, safe on shore, while the man whose life was worth all theirs put together exposed himself to needless peril. That he was really in danger she felt sure. She knew that Murray was apt to lose himself in his dreams; perhaps some visionary mood had blinded him to the menace of that mounting ice-ridge in front of the glacier—or had he madly chosen to stand or fall with this structure that meant so much to him? She would make him yield to her own terror, drag him ashore, if necessary, with her own hands.

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She stumbled, but saved herself from a fall, then gathered her skirts more closely about her and rushed on, measuring with instinctive nicety the length of every stride. It was not an easy path over which she dashed, for the ties were unevenly spaced; gaping apertures gave terrible glimpses of the river below, and across these ghastly abysses she had to leap.

The hoarse bursts of shouting from the shore ceased as the workmen beheld her flitting out along the steel causeway. They watched her in dumb amazement.

All at once O'Neil saw her, and hurried to meet her. "Eliza!" he cried. "Be careful! What possessed you to do this?"

"Come away!" she gasped. "It's dangerous. The jam— Look!" She pointed down the channel.

He shook his head impatiently.

"Yes!" she pleaded. "Yes! Please! They wouldn't come to warn you—they tried to stop me. You must go ashore." The frightened entreaty in her clear, wide-open eyes, the disorder of her hair, affected O'Neil strangely. He stared at her, bewildered, doubtful, then steadied her and groped with his free hand for support. He could feel her trembling.

"There's no danger, none whatever," he said soothingly. "Nothing can happen."

"You don't know. The bridge has never been tried. The ice is battering at it, and that jam—if it doesn't burst——"

"But it will. It can't last much longer."

"It's rising——"

"To be sure, but the river will overflow the bank."

"Please!" she urged. "You can do no good here. I'm afraid."

He stared at her in the same incredulous bewilderment; some impulse deep within him was struggling for expression, but he could not find words to frame it. His eyes were oddly bright as he smiled at her.

"Won't you go ashore?" she begged.

"I'll take you back, of course, but I want to stay and see——"

"Then—I'll stay."

"Eliza!" Her name burst from his lips in a tone that thrilled her, but with it came a sudden uproar from the distant crowd, and the next instant they saw that the ice-barrier was giving way. The pressure had become irresistible. As the Salmon had risen, the ice had risen also, and now the narrow throat was belching its contents forth. The chaos of up-ended bergs was being torn apart; over it and through it burst a deluge which filled the valley with the roar of a mighty cataract.

Clouds of spray were in the air; broken masses were leaping and somersaulting; high up on the shore were stranded floes and fragments, left in the wake of the moving mass. Onward it coursed, clashing and grinding along the brittle face of the glacier; over the alder-tops beyond the bend they could see it moving faster and faster, like the crest of a tidal wave. The surface of the river lowered swiftly beneath the bridge; the huge white pans ground and milled, shouldered aside by the iron-sheathed pillars of concrete.

"See! It's gone already," exclaimed O'Neil. "Once it clears a passageway, we'll have no more gorges, for the freshets are coming. The bridge didn't even tremble—there wasn't a tremor, not a scratch!"

Eliza looked up to find O'Neil regarding her with an expression that set her heart throbbing and her thoughts scattering. She clasped a huge, cold bolt-head, and clung to it desperately—for the upheaval in her soul rivaled that which had just passed before her eyes.

"Eliza!" She did not answer. "Child!" O'Neil's voice was shaking. "Why did you come to me? Why did you do this mad thing? I saw something in your face that I can't believe—that I—can't think possible. It—it gives me courage. If I don't speak quickly I'll never dare. Is it—true? Dear girl, can it be? I'm so old—such a poor thing—you couldn't possibly care, and yet, *why did you come?*" The words were torn from him; he was gripped and shaken by a powerful emotion.

She tried to answer, but her lips were soundless. She closed her eyes, and Murray saw that she was whiter than the foam far beneath. He stared into the colorless face upturned to his until her eyelids fluttered open and she managed to voice the words that clung in her throat.

"I've always—loved you like this."

He gave a cry, like that of a starving man; she felt herself drawn against him. But now he, too, was speechless; he could only press her close while his mind went groping for words to express the joy that was as yet unbelievable and stunning.

"Couldn't you see?" she asked breathlessly.

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He shook his head. "I'm such a dreamer. I'm afraid it—can't be true. I'm afraid you'll go away and—leave me. You won't, ever—will you, Eliza? I couldn't stand that." Then fresh realization of the truth swept over him, and they clung to each other in ecstasy, oblivious of their surroundings.

"I thought you cared for Natalie," she said softly, after a while.

"It was always you."

"Always?"

"Always!"

The breakfast gong had called the men away before the two figures far out upon the bridge picked their way slowly to the shore. The Salmon was still flooded with masses of ice, as it would continue to be for several days; but it was running free; the channel in front of the glacier was open.

Blaine was the first to shake O'Neil's hand, for the members of Murray's crew held aloof in embarrassment.

"It's a perfect piece of work," said Blaine. "I congratulate you."

The others echoed his sentiments faintly, hesitatingly, for they were abashed at what they saw in their Chief's face, and realized that words were weak and meaningless.

Dan dared not trust himself to speak. He had many things to say to his sister, but his throat ached miserably. Natalie restrained herself only by the greatest effort.

It was Tom Slater who ended the awkward pause by saying sarcastically: "If all the young lovers are safely ashore, maybe us old men who built the bridge can go and get something to eat."

Murray smiled at the girl beside him.

"I'm afraid they've guessed our secret."

"Secret!" Slater rolled his eyes. "There ain't over a couple thousand people besides us that saw you pop the question. I s'pose she was out of breath and couldn't say no."

Eliza gasped and fled to her brother's arms.

"Sis! Poor—little sis!" Dan cried, and two tears stole down his brown cheeks.

Then the others burst into a noisy expression of their gladness.

Happy Tom regarded them all pessimistically. "I feel bound to warn you," he said at length, "that marriage is an awful gamble. It ain't what it seems."

"It is!" Natalie declared. "It's better, and you know it."

"It turned out all right for me," Tom acknowledged, "because I got the best woman in the world. But"—he eyed his Chief accusingly—"I went about it in a modest way. I didn't humiliate her in public."

He turned impatiently upon his companions, still pouring out their babble of congratulations: "Come along, can't you?" he cried, "and leave 'em alone! I'm a dyspeptic old married man, but I used to be young and affectionate, like Murray. After breakfast I'm going to cable Mrs. Slater to come and bring the kids with her and watch her invalid husband build the rest of this railroad. I'm getting chuck-full of romance."

"It has been a miraculous morning for me," said Murray after a time, "and the greatest miracle is—you, dear."

"This is just the way the story ended in my book," said Eliza happily—"our book."

He pressed her closer. "Yes! Our book—our bridge—our everything, Eliza."

She hid her blushing face against his shoulder, then with thumb and finger drew his ear down to her lips. Summoning her courage, she whispered:

"Murray dear, won't you call me—Violet?"

THE END

It was midnight. Lord Algy, attired in full evening dress, was swimming in the basin of a public fountain in one of London's squares. To judge from the stroke he was using, Lord Algy was slightly intoxicated. An English "bobby," hearing the splashing, ran up to the fountain and flashed his pocket lamp upon the swimmer; whereupon Lord Algy exclaimed with fervent gratitude: "Thank God! The lights of Dover!"

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Uncle Sam's Freight Cars

WHEN AND WHERE YOU NEED THEM

by

J·Garrett Hill

***Editor's Note**: Here is a suggestion, offered by an expert, as a solution to one of the most irritating of our transportation problems. The author is Commercial Agent of the Queen and Crescent Route.*

THIS is an argument in favor of Government ownership of railway freight equipment—but not of the railways themselves.

There are those who believe that the time is ripe for our Government to take over the railroads. And they also believe that great reductions in rates and fares would result, while at the same time the net revenue accruing to the Government after deducting all operating expenses would soon have the coffers of our treasury overflowing.

I shall not stop to deny that government ownership of railroads may become practical within another generation or two. It certainly is not practical at the present time. And it is doubtful if any one living to-day will ever see the Federal Government successfully operating the railroads.

It is not my purpose, however, to argue that long step, but a much simpler one of real progress.

Government ownership of railway freight equipment is a very simple solution of our transportation problem. It is entirely practical, and could be put into effect with such ease that it would in no way disturb general business conditions. On the contrary, I believe that the country would enter upon an era of prosperity the like of which we have never known.

That there would be no serious opposition to this plan is evident, because:

It will benefit the shipper, the railroads, the Government, and the public.

It will effectually prevent car shortages,

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and all shippers will be able to secure equipment promptly upon request.

It will prevent any possible chance of discrimination in furnishing equipment.

It will at once put the Government in close touch with the movement of all freight traffic.

It will at once give the railroads all the capital they require for increased terminal facilities, additional motive power, and general improvements.

It will not affect the present railroad officers and employees.

It will not materially change the present method of operation.

It will not change the present existing freight rates.

It will not affect present earnings and dividends—except to increase them.

It will not affect the Interstate Commerce Commission.

It will not affect the present ownership of railroad tracks, locomotives, or anything else connected with railroads other than freight equipment.

At the present time there are in use approximately 2,500,000 freight cars which should be purchased by the Government at an average price not to exceed $800 per car. This would result in an investment of $2,000,000,000; and to this should be added approximately $1,000,000,000 for storage yards making the total cost to the Government approximately $3,000,000,000.

The storage yards should, of course, be located at various points throughout the United States and accessible to all railroads, so that cars could be furnished to any line promptly upon request and returned to the Government yards by the railroads when not in use.

The charge to be made by the Government for the use of equipment is, of course, a matter of detail to be worked out. But I personally consider fifty cents per car per day, plus one cent per car per mile, a fair charge. (At the present time the railroads have in effect a *per diem* rule whereby they pay forty-five cents per car per day for all foreign cars on their line; and they pay owners of private car lines three-fourths of a cent or more per mile for the use of their cars.)

The charge of fifty cents per car per day would be sufficient to insure the prompt handling of all cars by the railroads; for the transportation department of the various lines would be anxious to get the cars off their rails at the earliest possible moment in order to be relieved of this charge.

The average movement of a freight car (including periods of idleness) is about twenty-four miles per day; based upon this, and assessing charges as mentioned above, the earnings of the Government would be as follows:

DAILY EARNINGS	
2,500,000 cars at 50 cents per car per day	$1,250,000.00
2,500,000 cars at 1 cent per mile per car, av. 24 miles per day	600,000.00
Total daily gross earnings	$1,850,000.00
ANNUAL GROSS EARNINGS	
2,500,000 cars figured on above basis	$675,250,000.00
EXPENSES UNDER GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP	
INITIAL EXPENSE	
2,500,000 cars at $800 each	$2,000,000,000.00
Cost of storage yards (estimated)	1,000,000,000.00
Total initial cost	$3,000,000,000.00
ANNUAL EXPENSES	
$3,000,000,000.00 at 4 % interest per annum	120,000,000.00
Cost of upkeep and operation, including salaries, etc., etc.	80,000,000.00
Total annual expense	$200,000,000.00

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From this you will note the annual gross earnings are $675,250,000, while the total operating expenses, including interest on original investment, are only $200,000,000. Thus the net revenue accruing to the Government, after deducting all expenses, reaches the stupendous total of $475,000,000 per year.

This would at first appear to be an excessive charge, and you might infer that the present earnings of the railroads would be greatly reduced. Such is not the case, as the earnings would be considerably greater than at the present time: for sufficient equipment could be had at all times by the railroads, whereas under the present system the loss to the lines each year through lack of equipment is enormous.

This loss to the railroads also means a great loss to the shippers and consumers: The shipper loses the sale of his goods or, should the goods be perishable, loses the goods themselves; while the consumer's loss is measured by the difference in the price he is obliged to pay on account of the demand for the article he desires being greater than the supply, and this condition, when traced back, is found to be due to the fact that the railroads were unable to furnish equipment to bring the goods to market.

In addition to this the railroads and the public suffer a great loss every year on account of insufficient terminal facilities. This is due in large measure to the lack of sufficient funds; and many are the companies who are to-day endeavoring to increase their capital stock, or issue bonds and notes, to invest in improved terminal facilities.

Government purchase of freight equipment would at once give the railroads ample capital not only to increase their terminals, but also to meet all demands in the way of improvements for years to come—besides leaving a large surplus in their treasury.

As a concrete example of what this would mean to the railroads, take, for instance, the Pennsylvania, east and west, which has in use at the present time 246,665 freight cars. These cars, purchased at $800 each, would give the Pennsylvania a total of $197,332,000, or $23,812 per mile for their freight equipment, all or any part of which they could invest in improved terminals and other betterments.

Or take one of the smaller lines such as the Buffalo, Rochester, & Pittsburgh. It now has in use 17,741 freight cars, for which it would receive from the Government $14,192,800, or approximately $24,000 per mile of road.

This change would enhance the value of railroad securities, as the earning power would be greater for reasons above explained, and with increased earnings come increased dividends—which in turn result in higher values of securities.

Further, this would enable the railroads to progress at once beyond a point that under present conditions will take them fifty years to reach. And the American people would enjoy a railroad service the efficiency of which could not be improved upon. At the same time the net income to the Government would exceed one million dollars per day, while the railroads would be operating under less expense than at the present time.

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The ADVENTURES of WORRY-WORRY WILLIAMS

by

LEAVITT ASHLEY KNIGHT

ILLUSTRATIONS BY WILL CRAWFORD

"IF I HEAR THAT YOU'RE CHATTERING ABOUT WHAT YOU' VE LEARNED IN THIS OFFICE, I'LL—"

I WAS born on the wrong planet. Everybody on this dismal lump of dirt is built on a different pattern from mine. During the past year I've held sixteen jobs. All my bosses say the same thing: I ought to be in a padded cell; my mind wanders; I lack a sense of responsibility; I loaf; I dawdle over idiotic trifles; I make mountains of mole-hills.

Well, maybe they're right. I'm a misfit.

Mackintosh & Lowser, engineers' supplies, kicked me out last summer because I fell behind a week in posting their ledger. But I couldn't help it. Their previous bookkeepers had always written Fwd, instead of F'w'd, in carrying an account forward to the next page; so I had to go through all the books for the last fifteen years and insert the apostrophes. I couldn't allow such a mistake to stand, could I? When old Mackintosh discovered my correction, though, he screeched like a tugboat in a fog and threw a paper-weight at my head.

I've never been back to collect my wages from him.

Next I found a quiet post as assistant paymaster for Higginson & Digo, contractors. Four hundred of their Italians were filling in a swamp back of Jersey City, and it was my duty to keep a record of their names, addresses, time lost, and overtime. Well, one day a new shovel-artist on the pay-roll told me that he lived at 1189 Bleecker Street, Manhattan. I was sure that there was no such number, so I investigated. While I was doing this, the next day, the Italian left us and never came back—not even for his pay. That made it very difficult for me to learn his place of residence. Not a janitor in all Bleecker Street could identify the man. (It took me three whole days to consult them all.) I sought out the Italian consul, but he couldn't help me. I went to Ellis Island to scrutinize the records of all Italians who had passed through the immigration office. And I had checked off about nineteen thousand entries when Higginson & Digo's superintendent lost his temper because I

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hadn't found time to make up the pay-roll for the week.

Some of the laborers were quite peevish, too, because the firm wouldn't pay them off until the pay-roll had been made up and checked off properly. And one of them hit me with the back of his shovel while I was running away.

Next, the famous criminal lawyer, Morris B. Heiter, gave me twelve dollars a week for managing an elaborate card index, wherein he filed complete records of his clients and those who might be clients some day. That was the jolliest sinecure ever! Oily old Heiter slapped me on the back every day and vowed that I was a prize cataloguer. And he was right, I don't mind saying. I introduced three hundred special classifications into that index and put in cross-references for all of them. At any hour of day or night Heiter could turn to my index and find how many times Grubinsky had been acquitted of loft-looting, when Sooty Sue had served her last term on the Island for "jostling" on the cross-town cars, or how many pawnbrokers were hiding collapsible jimmies in their safes for Heiter's old customers.

HE MUMBLED IN VEXATION AND THRUST IT BACK.

Heiter was the only man in the world after my own heart. He was conscientious about little things. He knew that they were more important than big trifles. And he could not drop any subject of inquiry until he had discovered all that there was to be known about it. He was almost a genuine scientist—almost, I say. In only one trait was he lacking. He was not quite impersonal enough.

For instance: When he found that I had catalogued all the articles which his clients had been acquitted of stealing, he grew very cross. The next day he looked up the cards on One-Thumb Louie, the big jewel thief whom he had thrice delivered from Sing Sing, and discovered that I had written on it: "Color, weight, and cutting of ruby which Louie was accused of stealing on April 15, 1904, are identical with those of the stone in the scarf-pin which Mr. Heiter wears to church." At that my boss hopped up and down, swore, then suddenly hushed himself—and discharged me.

"Mr. Worry-Worry Williams," he said with a greenish grin, "you take little things too seriously. You'd better quit bothering over trifles. The strong-arm man will get you if you don't look out. Now beat it! And if I hear that you're chattering about what you've learned in this office, I'll——"

But I didn't stop to hear the threat out. I knew Heiter's ways.

Well, this is enough to show you that I'm out of touch with the times. Heiter was right; I do take little things too seriously. They excite my curiosity, and it will not give me peace until it has been appeased. It is an insatiable demon.

"You're going to starve to death, young fellow!" is what the man prophesied who discharged me from my sixteenth job last week. "The world hasn't any place for your kind of rattle-brain."

So I thought, too, as I shambled out of his office, bearing in my pay-envelope the only eight dollars I possessed. But you never can tell. There is a market even for misfits, as any tailor will tell you.

Three days ago, I was looking over the stern of the Hoboken ferry, wondering how it would feel to go down for the third time, and how I would look when the police-boat found me a month later under some reeking dock. Only three days ago! And here I sit, in my cozy new bachelor apartment off Gramercy Park, sipping ginger ale as I write my adventures with a gold-mounted fountain pen, and wondering between the lines whether I'll dine on Fifth Avenue or on Broadway.

And all the while, in a little mahogany desk near my study window, there lies a fresh bank-book; the few ink marks on its first page will rid me of care for five years. Me, Worry-Worry Williams, Champion Misfit!

The waters of the upper bay sparkled and fluttered as I watched them on that eventful morning three days ago. All the passengers on the ferry hung along the

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rail, sniffing the warm spring air and wondering aloud how soon swimming would be salubrious at Coney Island; or rather, to speak precisely, all were doing so except myself and one other. I was staring dismally across the world, figuring how my lonely eight dollars might keep me alive until I found my seventeenth job. Between my gloomy computations I compiled statistics about my fellow voyagers.

That's an old habit of mine, you know. I've a cigar-box full of such records. I can tell you how many blondes rode on the New Rochelle local leaving Grand Central Station at 5:23 P. M., March 19, 1910. I am accurately posted on the gross percentage of young ladies under sixteen and over forty who chew gum on the north-bound subway between Brooklyn Bridge and Fourteenth Street about nine o'clock in the morning (Sundays excepted). There's some mighty fine sociology buried underneath those figures!

Did you know, for instance, that all the girls who chew out loud wear hand-made lace collars? And that eighty-nine per cent. of those who wear hand-made lace collars pin newspapers under their skirts to make a noise like real silk petticoats? And do you know how to discover this scientifically; that is, without being arrested for disturbing the peace or the skirts? It is very simple. You simply . . . *

The only other passenger who was unstirred by the light and the merriment of the waters was a tall man. As he leaned restlessly against a stanchion, with his longish, dark head adroop and his nervous fingers tugging at his pointed chin, the morning sun shone slantingly across his cheeks and showed them grooved with the deep wrinkles that only Black Care chisels. (There are only nine species of wrinkles. Some day I hope to write a treatise on them.)

There was nothing unusual about his dress (a $27.50 Peters & Hicks blue serge, and all the rest in tune with it). Nor was there a hint of strangeness in his haircut; nor in his stride when, a moment later, he moved back and forth across the deck, his hands clasped behind him and his coat flung open. A most ordinary man indeed, I concluded; probably a poor devil like myself and a million others, out of work, out of cash, out of courage, and out of temper with himself and the world.

But all of a sudden the fellow did the most extraordinary thing, upset all my estimates, and set the wheels of adventure spinning.

Barely six feet from me he halted, scratched his head, pulled forth a memorandum-book from one vest pocket and a pencil from another, and started jotting something down. The pencil point broke.

"MY LORD! IT'S MR. BANNACK!"

* EDITOR'S NOTE.—In order to make space for other articles in this issue, the Editors have been compelled to cut out the next fifteen pages of Mr. Williams's MS., all of which deal with vital statistics. We shall turn the same over to the Bureau of Municipal Research.

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He sharpened it. Again it snapped in writing the very first word. A second time he sharpened it, now peevishly. Once more the graphite crumbled, and it continued to do so until it had been whittled down to an unusable butt. The man threw this overboard and fumbled through his vest pockets. In these, as his coat was flung wide open, I distinctly perceived two more pencils, both neatly sharpened. The man's fingers closed upon one of them and pulled it forth. But the instant he set eyes upon it, he mumbled in vexation and thrust it back. Likewise with the second one.

Then he turned to a bystander, borrowed a pencil, jotted down his memorandum, and sauntered off with a sigh of relief.

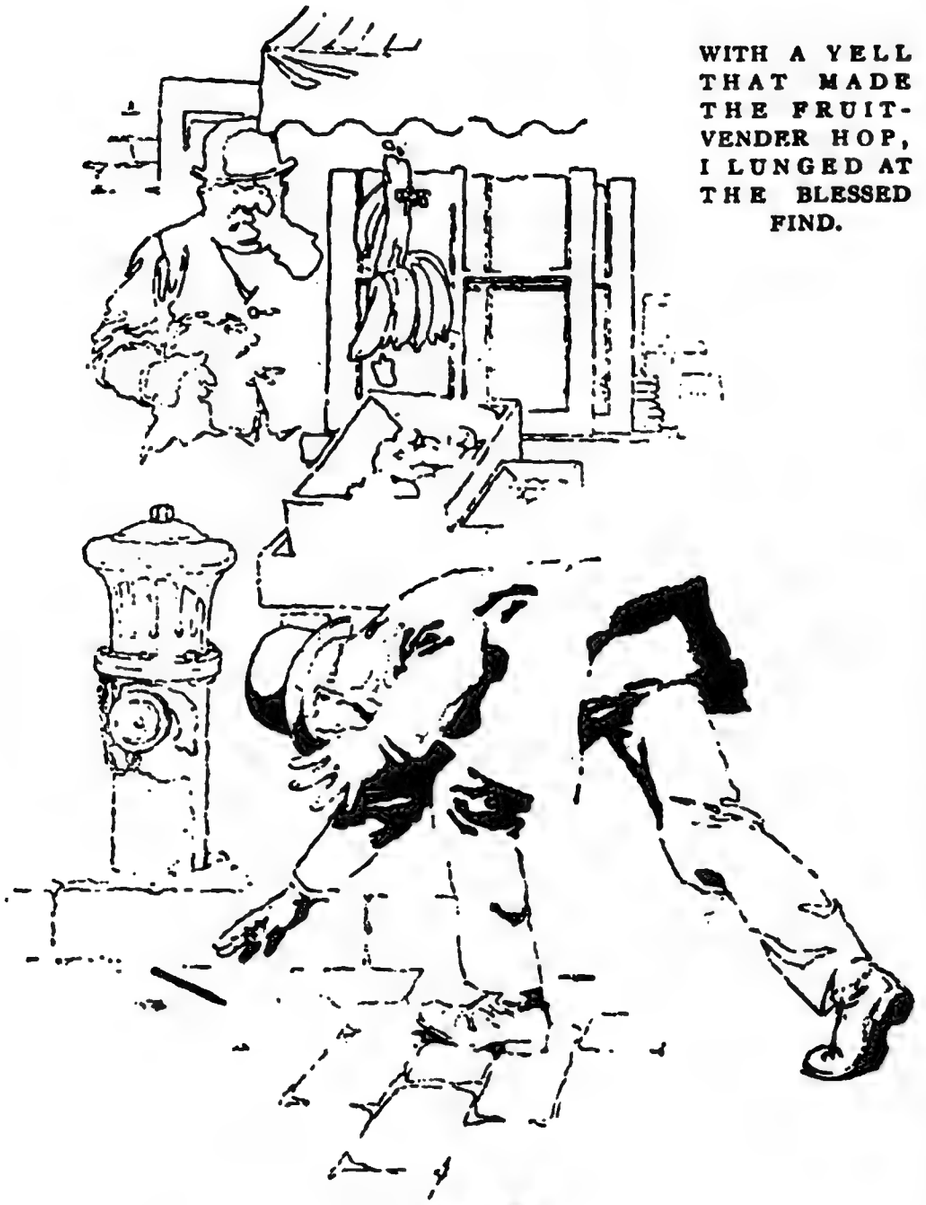
"What the deuce!" I exclaimed. "Why?"

Why indeed? Wasn't that the most irrational act you ever heard of? Was he a miser in the matter of pencils? No, for he whittled the bad pencil too prodigally; a miser would have gently hacked off half an inch, letting the shortest possible nub of graphite protrude.

Well, perhaps the two pencils were architect's tracing graphite; that kind would not make a legible mark on ordinary paper. I rubbed my hands with joy over this theory —but only for a few seconds. Then it collapsed. My eleventh job had been in an architect's office, where I had bought the draughting supplies. And I had there learned to classify all makes and varieties of pencils. Only too well did I know the six and only six styles of extra-hards; and the pair in the queer stranger's pocket were none of them. His were common, cheap, red-painted things, with erasers attached. (Extra-hards never carry erasers.)

Yes! Only miserable, one-cent school pencils!

How the accursed puzzle worried me! Just as surely as the Lord made me Worry-Worry Williams, I *had* to solve it. I would ask the stranger to explain——



WITH A YELL THAT MADE THE FRUIT-VENDER HOP, I LUNGED AT THE BLESSED FIND.

At that moment the boat bumped into her dock, the passengers crowded forward, the iron gates shot up, and the human stream squirted down the pier, hiding somewhere in its midst my man. Off I dashed, forgetting jobs and poverty, in search of him.

Where the long, dim passageways of the ferry station debouch into the clamorous expanses of West Street, the crowd divided; one-half trickling into Vesey Street, while the other half spattered a little northward toward Barclay Street. Trembling in fear of defeat, I sprinted at random in the latter direction until I had overtaken the first man off the boat. But neither he nor any of those in his wake was the mysterious one.

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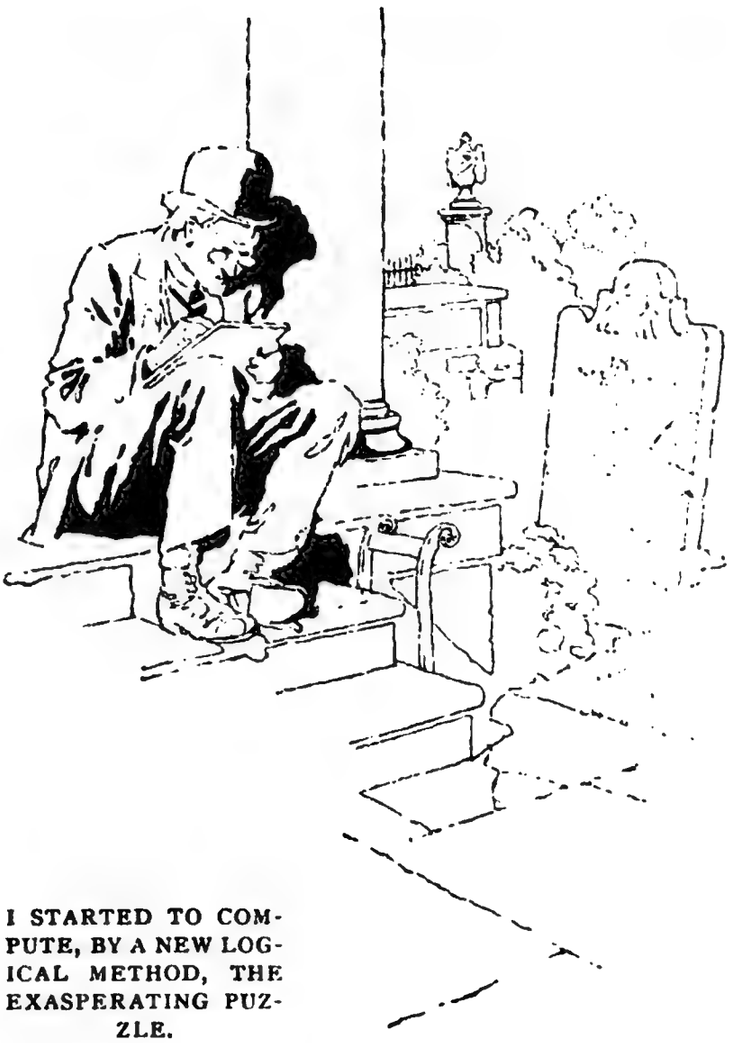
Into a cross street I shot and, a hundred yards northward, came upon the other current of travelers. A shrill squeak of joy escaped me. Not very far beyond, my quarry was sauntering across the street, arm in arm with a stout old gentleman who shuffled along feebly and with a slight limp.

I made a move to cross the street too; but a thick tumult of trucks barred my way for a full minute. When I finally pierced the line, my mysterious stranger had reached the corner of Church Street. Somewhat indistinctly I saw him leaning against a pillar of the elevated railway, comparing notes with his companion. From that distance it seemed as though the pair exchanged papers and scribbled something on the documents. That done, they shook hands; my quarry hurried southward, and the lame old gentleman disappeared around the corner toward the north.



I STARTED TO COMPUTE, BY A NEW LOGICAL METHOD, THE EXASPERATING PUZZLE.

I ran like a thief, ducking between porters, swerving from the uncertain paths of baboon-armed draymen who sweated and cursed under great boxes of chinaware and cut glass which the cellars of the neighborhood were spewing up.

As I neared the corner, some other men and a pack of boys began to run; whereat I laughed breathlessly, for I took it to be a case of Social Imitation, a phenomenon of the city concerning which I have compiled many fascinating statistics.

People are worse than sheep. If you crane your neck skyward on Broadway during the rush hour, everybody will be doing the same within two minutes. And as for . . . *

Just beyond the street corner, in front of a dirty little fruit and hand-out-lunch stand, the crowd of runners had focused and come to a halt. A patrolman was pushing them back, while he yelled to somebody: "'Phone fer an ambulance, an' fast too!" Then a rift opened through the sudden press of humanity, and I saw a dusty, black heap on the pavement; a shapeless and still heap.

It was the lame man! His upturned face stared with sightless eyes, and his cheeks shone with a preternatural, deep cherry flush.

"Apoplexy!" muttered the patrolman. "I've seen 'em before. Once in Park Row last spring——"

"He wasn't three feet from me," the fruit-stand man explained to his greedy audience, "and makin' as if to pull out a dime fer his oranges—he allus buys two every mornin'—w'en he jist crumpled t'gether like a piece o' wet paper——"

"My Lord!" a big, powerful man gasped, as he thrust himself to the fore, "it's Mr. Bannack! The wholesale-crockery man over in Park Place! How the devil did he drop off like this?"

He started to spin an incoherent biography of the poor dead gentleman, but I fled. I had to catch my man, you know, and ask him about his pencils. Cursing myself for allowing a trifling street incident to interfere with serious work, I scurried southward. But in vain: the thick tangles and ravelings of traffic had swept the stranger out of sight.

"You'll not beat me!" I cried and shook

*Sixteen pages of MS. here omitted.—THE EDITORS.

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a fist at the streaming multitudes; "I'll find him yet! I'll ask at the late Mr. Bannack's crockery-store! Somebody there will know him!"

How I raced back to the scene of sudden death! I must find the big man, pump him, have him guide me to the crockery-store.

Didn't I tell ycu at the outset that the whole world was against me? Well, if you wish more proof, here it is! When I reached the fruit-stand, the ambulance had left with its still burden, and the crowd had melted away. I tell you, my knees went weak at the sight of that empty street! People and even things inanimate were leagued in a dumb conspiracy to thwart my innocent desires.

Rage seized me, violent rage; I shook my fist at the dusty spot beside the curbing where the old gentleman had fallen, and raved at him for having deflected me from my search. And as I raved my eye shifted ever so slightly from the faint, misshapen stamp of perished humanity on the thick, loose filth of the cobble-stones; and there —snug against the curb—lay a pencil.

A common, cheap, red-painted pencil with an attached eraser. A pencil exactly like those which the dead man's last companion on earth had carried and had not used!

With a yell that made the fruit-vender hop, I lunged at the blessed find, seized it, and fled like a trailed thief. My prize was either one of the original pair or else out of the same factory. The worried stranger with the furrowed cheeks might have lent it when he passed over some papers. Or perhaps the crockery-dealer and his vanished friend bought their office supplies at the same place. But no! This couldn't be; for the man on the ferry wasn't the sort that had an office. He behaved like a poor clerk out of work, and he dressed the part. I scratched my chin. "This," I mused, "must be figured out from the beginning!"

I stepped into a stationery shop, bought six pads of cheap paper, and went over to the cool quiet of St. Paul's churchyard. There, on a cool stone in the blue shadow of the rear entry, I sat down, braced a pad on my knees, and started to compute, by a new logical method, the exasperating puzzle. I sharpened the dead man's pencil, put it to the paper——

And it made a mark exceedingly faint and undecipherable. It was the mark of an HHHHHH! And yet it was a common one-cent school pencil with a cheap, grimy eraser attached!*

* * * * * * * * * *

So, you see, all the symbolic equations yield a zero member; and this, of course, indicates that there is no rational hypothesis to explain why a man who, as I have proved, is not a draughtsman, should carry in his vest pocket two useless pencils *nicely sharpened*. We must therefore accept one of the two possible irrational hypotheses: (1) The man was insane, or else (2) the pencils were placed in his pocket by some accident.

Similarly are we forced to a non-rational, residual hypothesis to explain how a one-cent shoddy school pencil comes to have the expensive graphite of an architect's tracing-pencil. We must infer that some accident happened in the factory. Presumably a green apprentice dumped a tray of HHHHHH leads into the wrong machine.

The church clock was dinning four in the afternoon when I came back to the wretched world of Worry-Worry Williams, the worthless bookkeeper with $7.70 and no job. I had been squatting on the cold stone and an empty stomach five hours and twenty-eight minutes! And yet I bubbled over with joy. My work was done, crowned with success.

A newsboy passed, short-cutting through the churchyard. I bought an evening paper to peruse the "Help Wanted, Bookkeepers, Stenographers, etc.," column; and I gave the youngster a dime, with never a pang. I felt very good, you know; and then, too, the sheet was worth ten cents. For half of the first page was occupied by the late Mr. Otto Bannack, the wholesale-crockery dealer.

Mr. Bannack had been poisoned!

The District Attorney had offered a reward of two thousand dollars for the arrest of the unknown murderers. The dead man's brother had put up three thousand dollars. A famous detective had already been retained. The Central Office men were laying plans. And—there was in sight not the faintest clue, not a wisp of evidence! Said the paper:

*Mr. Williams sent us the six pads of paper covered with his computations and requested us to insert the same at this point in the narrative. Unfortunately, though, the mathematicians whom we have consulted report that only nine experts in the country understand Mr. Williams's symbols and equations. So it seems wise to omit the entire argument, except a brief summary of its conclusion.— THE EDITORS.

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It was at first supposed that Mr. Bannack had been stricken with apoplexy. But not a trace of this affliction was discernible at the inquest. Dr. Murley, the ambulance surgeon, declared that the peculiar congestion at the surface of the body would ordinarily indicate that Mr. Bannack had inhaled the fumes of hydrocyanic acid. "But this theory does not fit the present case," he added emphatically. "For Mr. Bannack was in the open air. There could not have been gas enough at large to hurt anybody, even supposing that it had been leaking badly in the vicinity. In the next place, it couldn't have been leaking; for nobody was making it thereabouts. And finally, the poison kills instantly; so that, if he had inhaled it, he must have done so on the very spot where he dropped. In that case, though, half a dozen passers-by would have been killed too, for that number were walking within a few paces of him."

The paper also said that the suicide theory must be dismissed. Mr. Bannack was a deeply religious man, perpetually jolly, in good health, prosperous, and on the eve of great good fortune. A patent glazing process which he had lately perfected had just been purchased by one of the great French potteries. Had he lived only a week longer, Mr. Bannack would have received three hundred thousand dollars for his secret formulas.

"Well," I reminded myself, "having proved that the pencil was extra hard, Mr. Worry-Worry must now hustle after a job. Man can not live on mysteries alone!" So I picked up the paper and turned to the "Help Wanted" columns. Four or five advertisements I checked with my new hybrid pencil by dint of flattening the newspaper against a flagstone and pressing the graphite hard.

THE SHEET WAS WORTH TEN CENTS.

Then of a sudden I stopped and gnashed my teeth. I had proved that the stranger either was crazy or else had put the HHHHHH pencils in his pocket by accident; *but I had not proved which of these alternatives was true!* Bungler! Fool! Rattle-brain that I was, to cover six pads of paper with computations and at last to leave the task unfinished!

I flung the newspaper down and dashed out of the mute churchyard into the swirl and roar of Broadway's evening rush hour. Before me swam, like a mocking specter, the image of the stranger with the seared cheeks. Him I must find and ask—courteously, of course—whether he was a lunatic or accidentally in possession of HHHHHH pencils.

Old Mrs. Bannack could not recognize the stranger from my description of him. Mr. Henry Bannack, the dead man's younger brother who had offered the reward, insisted that no such man had ever entered the crockery store.

"Well, then," I pressed on, "with whom did the mur—er—the deceased have business dealings recently?"

"Only with Limongi Frères, the Paris pottery firm—" Mr. Henry stopped sharply and eyed me narrowly. "I suppose you have some authority to pursue these very personal inquiries? From the District Attorney?"

"No!" I explained promptly. "Fact is, I'm not interested in the tragedy which has descended upon your family. I'm trying to find out why the stranger was carrying two pencils that he couldn't use——"

The Bannacks tightened their lips and turned me out of doors—quite rudely, too. So there I stood, in the thickening dusk before their tall and gloomy mansion, with only one slender clue. Limongi Frères! There was one chance in ten thousand that the man with the mongrel pencil could be found at that company's office. If that hint failed me——

On my way back to my Hoboken boarding-house I bought every extra edition of every evening paper; and I studied all the

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twenty-nine special reports, interviews, and editorials about the murder. A preposterous smother of hysteria and nonsense they were! To think that sane men and women could lash themselves and the public into such a frenzy over an ordinary murder of a mere respectable citizen! The case was too simple even to excite the intellect of a ten-year-old. Even the police could handle it unaided.

If Mr. Bannack was murdered, somebody had a motive for committing the act. This motive would be discovered by an inspection of Mr. Bannack's personal and business relations. And it was inevitable that, within a few days, a chemist would detect the poison. The rest of the problem would take care of itself: merely eliminate from your reckoning those persons who might have done the black deed but can prove that they did not. One person will be unable to do this, and he or she will be the guilty party.

How petty and fruitless it all was beside my intricate and unique problem!

Limongi Frères' offices filled the thirty-second floor of the Cottonworth Tower. Eight glorious, wind-swept, sun-flooded rooms there were, and in the fairest of them, on the following morning, Mr. James Lamonte, the firm's American manager, was listening intently to my description of the man with the pencils.

"You are a detective on the Bannack murder case, I take it." Mr. Lamonte bowed ever so slightly.

"Of course!" I replied glibly, and therewith I lied whitely. I was taking no chances on being thrown off this, my last clue.

"I know no such man," the manager shook his head. "But I haven't been in New York long. You'd better ask the rest of our office staff."

From man to man he passed me, and each shook his head. There was no acquaintance of theirs with a longish dark head, nervous fingers, pointed chin, and deeply grooved cheeks.

"The shipping clerk over at the Belgian Peachblow Vase Company looks a little like that," somebody said. "But his chin isn't very pointed——"

A door swung behind us, *and in walked my man!*

"I'm from the Belgian Peachblow Vase Company," he addressed the manager. "The last consignment of enamel plate we received from you did not tally with the invoice. I'd like to adjust——"

"Excuse me a moment!" I cried. "These mere business matters can wait. I have an important question, Mr.—er——"

"Murray." The shipping clerk scowled swiftly at me. "And I'm in a hurry."

"Mr. Murray, I shall detain you only an instant. Pray explain this!" And I held out the mysterious pencil.

Never shall I forget the flicker of emotions that made hideous the clerk's ill-favored features. More swiftly than the shifting of light on moving waters his hue changed from ashen gray to the bilious green of sick terror. He took the pencil, as though hypnotized, and fixed his gaze upon it.

"I SUPPOSE YOU HAVE SOME AUTHORITY TO PURSUE THESE VERY PERSONAL INQUIRIES?"

"You had two of them on the ferry-boat yesterday," I continued. "This is the one which Mr. Bannack was carrying when he died. You lent it to him as you walked up from the pier with him. It is a very peculiar pencil. There is none like it made in any factory. I have been examining it——"

"Damn you!" Murray shrieked. "Devil from hell! You have been living in my brain like a worm! Only a worm in my brain could have found my scheme. I have never breathed it even to myself. I have carried it out, step by step, in my own room, behind locked doors. I

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have hidden my connections with Bannack and his great secret. And now, after I have won the prize that would make me rich, comes this imp of Satan, traps me like a rat. . . . Ha? . . . I'll never see jail! . . ." A hideous shriek escaped him.

And, as Mr. Lamonte rushed to the telephone for the police, Murray thrust the pencil point into his mouth, bit off the lead, and swallowed it, laughing horribly and making loathsome faces at us.

"PRAY EXPLAIN THIS!"

When the two patrolmen arrived, Murray lay dead. Pretty soon we had a chemist at work on the pencil; and before the newsboys were crying the red-ink Murder Extra in the streets below, we had torn the veils from the double mystery. We split the pencil open and found it not graphite, but *a stick of potassium cyanide crystals* prepared in some unknown manner so that they would dissolve with amazing rapidity in water that was faintly alkaline.

"It is all clear now," observed Mr. Lamonte. "Murray sought Mr. Bannack's secret formula, for which Limongi Frères had offered three hundred thousand dollars. Somehow he stole it; but in so doing had to kill Mr. Bannack. Like most other people, the crockery man would make a hard lead-pencil write legibly by sticking it into his mouth and wetting it slightly. So the diabolical Murray contrived his strange instrument of death. Saliva is faintly alkaline. Mr. Bannack touched the pencil to his lips. That's all!"

And so it proved. We searched Murray's small flat in Newark that very afternoon and in a writing-desk found letters that laid bare the thief's trick. He had posed as the discoverer of a glazing formula—which he did most successfully, because he was a chemist of rare attainments—and he had been urging Mr. Bannack to combine with him and float a huge new pottery corporation. The innocent, good-natured Mr. Bannack had been deceived by the man's technical wisdom and by his connection with the Belgian Peachblow Vase Company. As men of honor, they had exchanged copies of their formulas—and the rest you can guess.

So here I lounge, in my cozy new apartment off Gramercy Park, sipping ginger ale and writing my adventures with a gold-mounted fountain pen. My picture has been in all the newspapers, over the title "The Wizard Sleuth." I have collected the five thousand dollars reward. And two detective agencies have given me one thousand dollars each for the privilege of consulting me during the ensuing year.

I shall now write that essay on the nine species of face wrinkles. If you have any interesting facts on this subject, please send them in at once.

GOODNESS GRACIOUS!

Mother (looking through the magazine): "Darling, I see from statistics given here that every third baby born in the world is a Chinese."

Father (fondling his first-born): "Then thank God this is our first."

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OUR INVISIBLE ALLIES

by

WILLIAM HANNA THOMSON
M·D·-L·L·D·

AUTHOR OF "BRAIN AND PERSONALITY," "WHAT IS PHYSICAL LIFE?" ETC.

THE STORY of physical life upon this globe presents us with more interesting disclosures, along with mysterious hints of others coming, than can be found in any novel or romance. We also know that it is a true story, whether at present we can understand it all or not. As it is only in this generation that we have begun to read it aright, it is rather tantalizing to find that each chapter now ends like a serial in a magazine, with the provoking words, "To be continued."

But we have found out that it is life that kills us; and modern science is teaching us to be constantly on our guard against those mortal but always living organisms which can be seen only through a microscope, and against those even smaller.

For powerful and very definite forms of life, more dangerous to man than either a lion or a bulky rhinoceros, are actually too small to be seen by any microscope yet made. Such are the living agents which cause yellow fever, hydrophobia, and that formidable *polio myelitis;* for they easily slip through the pores of a Berkfield porcelain filter, which stops the larger bodies in the virus of smallpox. Professor Simon Flexner, indeed, doubts whether the human eye is constructed so that it can see these forms of life, however it be aided by high-power microscopes. Yet each of them is as definite and specific a thing as any that can be found in the living kingdom.

What a dismal prospect this presents of our fate, overrun by living organisms that we can not even see!

But just here a great light appears. We are learning that because microbes are living things, for that reason alone we can generate in our bodies such an immunity against them that we need not care much about them. They can not exist if they can not grow, and medical science now is busy at finding out how altogether to prevent their growing.

For long it had been known that some serious infections, like the bubonic plague, typhoid fever, smallpox, and yellow fever usually attack the same person only once, so that when the patients recover they remain so immune from them that they can act as nurses for any new cases of the disease. Before it was demonstrated that these affections were due to living organisms, this immunity could not be accounted for; but, once this discovery was made, all living nature furnished clues to the problem and our hopes were accordingly raised.

But it soon appeared that the subject of immunity is not a simple one. With some infections, *e. g.*, pneumonia, the reverse of subsequent immunity is true, for one attack seems to predispose to a second. Likewise, why some persons are quite insusceptible to infection, while others are very susceptible, no one knows.

Theories about the nature and mechanism of immunity abound in great excess of facts; but facts there are, and we will begin with the most certain of them.

The blood contains about 5,200,000 red blood-cells to the cubic millimeter. But it also contains in the same space some seven to eight thousand whitish corpuscles called leucocytes. These leucocytes are of several kinds, some seventy to eighty per cent. of them being of the variety called polynuclears, which move about both in the blood-vessels and outside of them much as

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they please. They act like those animals called amebæ, which crawl about without legs because they can project long processes from their jelly-like bodies, and by these pull themselves along to their desired objects, afterward withdrawing their processes into themselves again.

For us the great interest of these "polys" is that as one of them wanders about, it may meet a bacterium which has no business to be there, but is a veritable foreign intruder. After a short interview, the "poly" proceeds to eat up the bacterium—not by its mouth, for it has none, but even more effectively by flowing all round it; and then, when it has engulfed the bacterium, it forthwith digests it as completely as we do a savory morsel which we swallow. On this account these "polys" are called phagocytes, or cell-eaters.

Some biologists even imagine that these polynuclears are conscious, because they seem to be so intelligent in their business. Thus, when a pronounced invasion of hostile bacteria takes place, the "polys" first greatly increase in number and then accumulate especially at the place where the enemy is entering. This phenomenon—phagocytosis—constitutes the chief factor in the production of immunity, according to Professor Metchnikoff and his school.

WHERE WASHING IS FATAL

But some modifying considerations now enter the problem. In the first place, experimenters have found a way to wash the leucocytes very thoroughly, and, after being thus laundered, the leucocytes are found to be unable to eat bacteria when they meet them. This has been shown to be because the leucocytes have lost something by washing—something which further investigation shows to be a substance existing in the serum of the blood that is needful for preparing a leucocyte to dispose of a bacterium. This substance is called an opsonin, or something which makes ready.

Other limitations to phagocytosis are also discoverable. Some evil bacteria exist which do not excite the leucocytes either to increase or to do anything else. The bacillus of typhoid fever is one of these; and against the animal microorganism which causes such havoc in the blood in malaria, all kinds of leucocytes are powerless. The same may be said to a great extent of the formidable tubercle bacillus. Moreover, the polynuclears can not wander everywhere. They do not enter the brain nor the spinal cord, and very rarely the muscles; while, on the other hand, in that dangerous condition known as anaphylaxis, the polynuclears quit the blood altogether, to gather in an exclusive mass-meeting in the lungs.

But other destroyers of bacteria have been found besides the leucocytes, and these therefore are factors in producing immunity. One set of fixed cells lining the blood-vessels has this eating power. But the most potent agent has been found in what is called the bacteriolytic or bacteria-dissolving properties of healthy blood serum itself. The opponents of Metchnikoff claimed that this threw into the shade his polynuclears as our chief protection against foreign invaders.

TYPHOID—INSIDE AND OUT

We have no room to describe the long war which has been waged between the Metchnikoff and the Ehrlich schools on this subject. Suffice it to say that, after going into an eclipse for some years, Metchnikoff has now emerged again by showing that the experiments which his opponents performed with their bacteriolysins in test-tubes outside, were not confirmed by what takes place inside the living body itself. Thus, typhoid bacilli are readily dissolved by blood serum in a test-tube, but that does not prevent these bacilli from multiplying in us at a great rate so as to cause typhoid fever.

But we must hasten on to other important branches of our subject. The powerful agents which cause diphtheria and tetanus, or lockjaw, act by forming soluble poisons which they throw off to circulate in the blood. We should be glad if other bacteria would do the same thing, for the living system shows a power to generate chemical antidotes to their poisons, which go by the name of antitoxins. By isolating the diphtheria antitoxin, we can now neutralize the poison of this disease so as greatly to reduce its mortality.

Unfortunately, however, the majority of injurious bacteria hold their toxins tightly within their own cells, so that they are called endotoxins. These are set free in the blood only when the bacteria die. This occurs in a few minutes; but the dying bacteria are soon succeeded by their multiplying progeny, each with its fresh endotoxins.

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To obviate this in the case of typhoid bacilli, they have been frozen stiff by the awful cold produced by evaporating liquid air. When thawed out, however, they are as lively as ever, and so it was proposed to powder them up fine while frozen. This procedure they can not stand, but constitute after it a mass of simply defunct bacteria. It was hoped that we could thus set free their endotoxins, so that we could produce their corresponding antitoxins. But this ingenious device has not come into general use because only a few practitioners have the facilities to procure bacteria and then pulverize them.

Lastly, another important element in our study now looms up. Cholera germs, or vibrios, as they are called, when injected into a properly prepared guinea-pig, are rapidly killed and dissolved. But this active bacteriolytic effect has been shown to be due to the cooperation of *two* separate agents, neither of which alone can effect anything.

From this on, the conditions involved in the subject of immunity increase in complexity at every turn, owing to the infinite variety of elements which exist in the living blood and tissues. No former problems in the history of medicine compare for complexity with those now encountered as our investigation proceeds. The student has to learn the meaning of such terms as antigens, enzymes, amboceptors, and their complements, lysins, agglutinins, and precipitins, each with its corresponding anti, such as toxins, anti-toxins, and anti-antitoxins.

ZOOLOGY BY BLOOD TESTS

Nor are these fancy names, for each of them refers to demonstrable elements in the blood which have much to do both with the diagnosis and with the treatment of disease. Take the precipitins alone. They are chemical reactions so absolutely specific that it is proposed to rearrange by them the zoological classification of animals. Thus a single drop of the blood of a walrus shows unmistakably not only that he is a mammal which, like the whales and the seals, has taken to the sea, but that he is altogether different from them, because a drop of his blood does not react with their blood but reacts immediately with a drop of the blood of horses, asses, and zebras, thus proving that he is an equine that now lives on an exclusively fish diet.

There is a recent method of treating disease which is called Vaccine Therapy. One example will illustrate what we mean by this term. I was called in consultation to the case of a previously healthy young athlete who, I found, had two large abscesses in his side, abscesses in both knees and in one shoulder, as well as in other parts of his body. He was then delirious, and it was plain that he had such a diffused infection that he would soon succumb if something did not stop this general blood-poisoning. I directed my assistant to make a culture from the purulent discharge of one of the abscesses to find out what the particular bacterium was which caused all this trouble. In due time he pronounced it to be a pure culture of *staphylococcus pyogenes aureus*.

This is probably the agent by which Satan afflicted Job, for much the commonest result of this bacterium's working is to cause boils.

I told my assistant at once to raise a crop of these bacteria and then kill them so that we might begin with injecting fifty million of the dead microbes into our patient. This was done, and in eighteen hours the fever dropped, the patient became perfectly rational, and finally, after a long course of vaccines, he wholly recovered and is now walking the streets.

Lastly, the most terrible of all diseases comes into view, and that is cancer. Justly, it and its relative sarcoma are called malignant. In all civilized countries great sums are willingly spent to equip laboratories for its investigation, and one of the first results has been to show that nearly every known vertebrate, whether tame or wild, is liable to cancer. Thus cattle, lions, and mice may have it, and it is very fatal among trout.

This proves that it is quite unlike the infections which we have been talking about, for they are very special in the choice of their victims. About the sole comfort left to us is that malignant diseases are not catching.

Hitherto our one hope has been to discover where cancer begins and then be sure to cut it all out with a surgeon's knife. But it is not impossible that a cure for cancer may yet be found in vaccine therapy, by the injection into the affected body of extracts made from cancerous tumors.

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Everybody's Magazine
Trumbull White Managing Editor
Erman J. Ridgway President
Egy Brown Sec'y and Treasurer

SPRING AND MACDOUGAL STREETS NEW YORK CITY

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STRAIGHT TALK

With EVERYBODY'S PUBLISHERS

HERE are some letters which ought to be of interest to the readers of EVERYBODY'S.

A few weeks ago, and thus nearly three years since we published the series of articles "Under the Prophet in Utah," by the Hon. Frank J. Cannon, the following letter came to the magazine:

DEAR EVERYBODY'S:

We have been subscribers to your valuable magazine for a number of years and have always enjoyed it all, especially your good efforts in exposing fraud.

We were especially interested in the articles written a few years ago by Frank J. Cannon, giving details of the awful conditions existing in the Mormon Church. You then may judge of my surprise when, a few days ago, a Mormon Elder calling himself a missionary of his church, came to my door and, when I told him I was a reader of EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE and no believer in his church nor its doctrines, told me that Frank J. Cannon was again working in and for the Mormon Church. This Mormon also said that Cannon had written a tract within a year, in which he stated that the Mormon Church was the true church.

I hope you can deny this, not only for EVERYBODY'S' sake, but for the sake of everybody.

Hoping for a reply, I remain,

(MRS.) D. M. T.

Yakima City, Washington.

Of course we knew Senator Cannon's opinions and his good faith. It was a satisfaction first to reply that the statements were preposterously untrue, and second to tell the Senator what had been charged and answered.

He has never ceased his activity in the crusade instituted in these pages, and the response to his work has been very great. How great may be judged from such tactics as these efforts to counteract it, reported from the Mormon mission field.

But what is to be thought of the integrity of a "religious" propaganda that adopts such methods?

Senator Cannon's letter in reply is as follows:

MY DEAR MR. WHITE:

Accept my grateful acknowledgment of your courtesy.

There is no word of truth in the statements quoted by our kind friend.

I am speaking every day, through the Lyceum and Chautauqua seasons, against "The Mormon Kingdom." My lecture under this title has been delivered nearly four hundred times since EVERYBODY'S aroused the country; and it is booked for more than a year to come.

Cordially yours, FRANK J. CANNON.

Chautauqua Assembly, Denton, Texas.

CONCERNING DARWIN, AND DOGS, ARTISTS, AND SUCH

The following letter was evidently written more in sorrow than in anger:

DEAR SIR:

Why, in the name of goodness, do you persist in shattering our ideals? In the stories about Alicia, Fido the dog, and Peter the cat, you have violated all the canons of truth and art by your reckless disregard of Fido's identity. I am a thorough believer in Darwin's theory of evolution, but have always believed that changes of type were a matter of countless generations. Undoubtedly spaniels, wire-haired terriers, and collies had a common ancestor. You, however, out-darwin Darwin, making Fido first a spaniel, then a wire-haired terrier, and now a collie.

If you can in any way reconcile this miraculous change, I would be glad of a clue.

Yours doubtfully,

St. Louis, Mo. K. F. H.

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Heavy-hearted under the sense of our misused opportunities and fully prepared to face the worst, we turned wearily to the file of the magazine, and looked up Mr. George Weston's "Alicia" stories in the September, October, and December (1912) numbers of EVERYBODY'S.

Deeply chagrined at what we found, we consulted the Art Department to discover, if possible, the desperate Darwinistic causes which had resulted in such a zoological crime.

The result of this consultation was distinctly comforting. Much refreshed in spirit, we addressed our reader as follows:

DEAR SIR:

We wish to thank you for your letter of June twenty-sixth. There seems to be nothing to be said. It would appear that you have caught us squarely between wind and water; but as you give a specific request that we reconcile this miraculous change, possibly it would interest you to know the facts.

You have indeed suggested them in your letter. It is merely Darwin speeded up. In the first of these three stories, if you read it carefully, you will find that the only description of Fido is that he wore a thoughtful look. This story was given to an artist to illustrate.

FIDO WORE A THOUGHTFUL LOOK.

When it appeared, the author, who is a man of parts, descended upon the Art Department with prompt objurgations. He said that the artist's Fido was not the Fido he was writing about at all, and that he wanted his own Fido, and he didn't like the artist's. So, in deference to his wishes, another artist was chosen, with whom the author went into executive session, explaining Fido.

It seems, however, that he still withheld Fido's pedigree and vital statistics. When the second set of pictures came out, the author again paid us a visit. He said that while Fido was vastly improved, he still felt that care and breeding could produce a better dog, and after a somewhat extended conversation the author finally coyly admitted that the Fido in his mind was "a sort of a collie."

FIDO WAS VASTLY IMPROVED.

So in the last story Fido appears as you yourself discovered him—"a sort of a collie." The situation is such that we don't even feel authorized to promise you that the next number may not show Fido as a "sort of a" Newfoundland, or perhaps a "kind of a" Great Dane; in fact, our beliefs in the bona fides of Fido have been very rudely shaken.

We can only congratulate you that you have been permitted to witness the work of creation, and to express our hope that so momentous a spectacle will not more than temporarily disturb your poise.

Sincerely yours,
EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE.

We don't consider the episode closed, because as long as Mr. Weston continues writing the delicious "Alicia" stories, and as long as the supply of artists holds out, a new Fido may jump above the horizon at any moment; but we do think the matter is now on a satisfactory business footing, and we feel quite capable of persuading even Darwin himself of the reasonableness of our attitude.

SOME RISING YOUNG POET!

I have read with much admiration the ballad of "The Constitution and the Guerrière," by John Wolcott Adams, in your July number.

There can be no doubt as to a distinctiveness in the style of this rising young poet.

May we not hope that an early issue of your magazine will contain a ballad on the Shannon and Chesapeake from the same pen?

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. T. W. C.

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